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ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to help further education colleges in the United Kingdom devise strategies to meet adult learners' needs. The opening section identifies the demographic and labor market changes that necessitate service to adult learners. Key characteristics of effective college programs for adults are highlighted: institutional flexibility, a student-centered approach, and curriculum design and delivery tailored to employer, group, and individual needs. The body of the manual is divided into three sections: (1) opening up the college; (2) learning issues; and (3) policy issues. Issues for college managers and staff are set out in checklists for each main topic discussed. The first section is concerned with access issues, examining the key processes that can stimulate participation: marketing, promoting the college, outreach, and guidance. Section II explores provision and curriculum issues, accreditation, assessment, and teaching and learning strategies. The third and largest section addresses policy issues. Its chapters cover the following topics: supporting the adult learner, equal opportunities, staff development, collaboration, monitoring and evaluation, and finance and resources. An appendix gives background information on the project that developed this manual. (NLA)

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opening colleges to adult learners

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report of the NIACE-TEED *research project on adult learners in colleges of further education.*

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OPENING COLLEGES TO ADULT LEARNERS

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edited by
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INTRODUCTION

This Employment Department project on adult learners and further education was conducted for the Training Agency by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education. The principal aims were:

- to produce a report which will assist further education colleges in devising strategies to meet the needs of adult learners
- to identify areas for future research and development.

The report has been prepared for the use of further education managers, governors, teaching and non-teaching staff; LEA officers; members of TEC boards and working groups. It is divided into three main sections, each of which reviews a number of areas of policy and practice in relation to adult learners. The chapters identify issues confronting colleges at different stages of their contact with adult learners and offer practical guidance based on existing college experience. For quick reference purposes, the implications for college managers and staff are separated out at the end of each chapter.

Adult learners are defined here as those returning to education, for whatever purpose, after an interval since completion of compulsory education. This generally includes people over 21 and a wide variety of groups, including:

- people in employment seeking new skills or updating of skills
- people seeking employment or career change
- people preparing to return to the labour market (such as women who have taken a career break)
- people preparing for entry to higher education
- people preparing for retirement.

The report's point of departure is to outline the characteristics and traditions of further education and the principal characteristics of adult learners. The following sections explore ways of bringing the two together. Colleges are flexible institutions and are already responding in a variety of ways to new circumstances and conditions. However, institutional change can take place at different levels and be considered from a number of perspectives: the LEA; college governors and management; teaching staff and course teams; and individual learners. The report puts emphasis on the role of college management in the belief that this sets the framework for change throughout an institution.

CHANGES WHICH ARE ENCOURAGING GREATER ADULT PARTICIPATION

Potentially, the adult market for vocational education and training is many times greater than that for young people. Where access is improved there is clear evidence that numbers rise quickly and dramatically (Pursaill, 1990).

Demographic change

The well-documented downturn in numbers of traditional (16–19-year-old) students has sensitised many colleges to the need for a broader entry base. Because of birth-rate differences in socio-economic groups the situation is not uniform across the country and some colleges are still recruiting most of their students from their traditional clientele. However, the overall student profile has changed considerably since 1979. People over 21 currently account for over 50 per cent of students in all post-school education and their participation is steadily increasing. This group includes older students completing their initial education and people over 25 returning to education.

Skills shortages and updating needs

Demographic change is placing an even stronger emphasis on the relationship between further education and employers. Labour and skills shortages in some occupations and regions are encouraging employers to develop or update the skills of the existing workforce, and it has been predicted that by 1995 at least 50 per cent of people in employment will need updated or new qualifications within the NVQ framework. It has also been estimated that over a million new workers will need to be recruited to the workforce by 1995, and women, older adults and unemployed people have been identified to make up for shortfalls in younger labour force entrants. The recruitment of such groups will inevitably increase demand for education, training and retraining.

New training needs

The gradual erosion of Britain's heavy manufacturing base has led to changes in the country's occupational structure and working patterns. This, combined with the pace of technological change, means that people are increasingly expected to move from one occupational area to another and acquire new skills during their working life. To develop an adaptable and multi-skilled workforce requires education and training providers to move away from training in narrowly defined job specialisms towards a broader continuing education and training curriculum, and to keep pace with technological change in order to offer workers the re-skilling and updating they will increasingly need. The creation of a single European market in 1992 will heighten internal competitiveness and the need for Britain to become a high skill economy.

Educational changes

Adult access to further education has been improved by a number of initiatives: for example, the PICKUP scheme encouraging links between industry and educational institutions; a variety of initiatives to assist groups such as the adult unemployed; the system of National Vocational

Qualifications (NVQs) which puts stress on mapping of competences and accreditation of prior learning and achievements; the introduction of individualised learning plans; the establishment of Open College Networks and Federations enabling more flexible access and accreditation; and the piloting of training credits which give more power of choice to the customer. Innovations arising from the 1988 Education Act and the establishment of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) have resulted in a new context for further education. Much in the way that they have competed for ET and YT contracts, colleges now need to tender for training contracts from the TECs in competition with other providers. In addition, the growing emphasis on **access, equity, curriculum entitlement** and **attainment** is encouraging colleges to demonstrate that they are providing a service which responds to the varied learning needs of individuals and local communities, although some are experiencing a tension between the pressure to be market-led and the desire to widen access to all sections of the community.

The need to find new markets

Further education funding is now firmly linked to target enrolment numbers agreed between colleges and their LEAs. There are direct incentives to colleges to improve their recruitment, retention and completion rates and penalties on relatively poor performance in these areas. Overall, public funding of further education seems set to decline in real terms in the foreseeable future and this, together with increasing competition, will oblige colleges to try and generate income from other sources, including the tapping of new adult markets. To increase the number of adult students, some colleges will need to undertake more market research and developmental activity.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS

A principal characteristic of mature students is their diversity. Adults enter further education with a vast range of personal circumstances and a wealth of experience. Different groups – those in employment, the unemployed, women returners, ethnic minority groups, older people facing retirement – participate in education with a wide variety of motives, purposes and expectations. They consequently require different kinds of provision, teaching approaches and forms of support. Hence the need, with adult learners, to 'tailor' programmes and services to identified requirements to a far greater extent than is customary with conventional younger students.

Adults have multiple roles and commitments. They may have to fit study in with full- or part-time employment, shift-work, domestic responsibilities or the 'availability for work' condition if they are unemployed. This means that adjustments need to be made to course structure, length, delivery and timing, and that assistance with costs, transport and childcare may be required by some individuals.

Many adults come to college with an educational background that is markedly different from that of younger students, and this can require

adjustments to admission requirements. Some adults have lost the habit of learning and, because of earlier school failures, doubt their ability to learn. Such people require learning support in the form of guidance, help with study skills and, sometimes, literacy and numeracy programmes.

THE ROLES OF FURTHER EDUCATION

Colleges provide learning opportunities for the diverse needs of the economy, individuals and the community. They commonly provide:

- initial education and training for labour force entrants
- specialised training, retraining or updating for the workforce of local industry and commerce (including on- and off-the job training)
- consultancy and advisory services
- a range of general education courses for the local community
- access courses (to higher education).

The first two of these roles are generally afforded the highest priority since one of the primary purposes of further education is to prepare people for work. Thus provision has been oriented to meet students' vocational aspirations and employers' needs and, in recent years, colleges have been increasingly called upon to develop and update the skills of those in work.

The sector has a less well-defined role in relation to other adult learners. Some colleges feel that they already cater fully for older learners by enabling them to participate on an infill basis or by providing separate 'Adult Education' departments. About 50 per cent of LEAs currently make some adult education provision via colleges, but this is often a discrete service, provided separately from and not integrated with the mainstream. Research suggests that the existence of an adult education department within a college does not necessarily influence mainstream practice (Marks & Elsdon, 1991). Moreover, many examples of innovative approaches and provision developed for adults with the help of special funding have remained separate from an institution's main work. As a result, methods of working with mature students have not always filtered through to other areas of college work. A report on PICKUP by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (1988) observed that some colleges appeared to lack sensitivity and understanding in relation to the needs of adult learners. On the other hand, many colleges are committed to providing services for adult learners, and in some adult students are now a priority. These colleges are moving from a course-based system to a more client-based service in response to industrial and commercial pressures and community demand. By offering flexible learning opportunities and attendance modes, and tailoring courses to clients' requests and needs, such colleges have brought about a steep rise in the number of mainstream students aged 25 and over.

The report has been written in full recognition that the further education sector is very diverse: some colleges are highly specialised; some are national centres of excellence, some have become community colleges and others

tertiary colleges. This means there are wide variations between institutions in style, ethos and ambience and in the nature of the provision and support they offer adult learners. Depending on their roles and specialisms, some will inevitably have a wider experience of work with such students than others. Some of the established further education colleges, for example, have always had a broad role and have developed a comprehensive approach to adult learners, as have many which have been reorganised or amalgamated. Many former technical colleges, on the other hand, have structures and traditions which make change more difficult to achieve, and some still organise their provision, facilities and procedures to suit the perceived needs of 16–19-year-olds.

The report also recognises that there can be wide differences between separate areas within a single institution. HMI reports on individual colleges have commented that some departments or units create an environment favourable to adult learning while others in the same building are less hospitable and welcoming. Sometimes, established departmental structures make whole-institution change difficult to achieve as managers will readily admit. According to one principal: 'This is a very traditional establishment and transferring ideas from one part to another is no doddle.'

Thus, while it is true to say that the numbers of adult students have increased in further education as a whole, the situation varies enormously between geographical areas and individual colleges. Each college has a different set of internal and external circumstances and is at a different stage of development. Moreover, colleges are still local education authority institutions, which means that LEAs retain a strategic planning and resourcing function and their policies towards adult learners will be affected by factors such as the existence of free-standing adult education services.

Existing research, reports and information from colleges suggest that a genuinely adult-oriented service cannot be achieved through piecemeal tinkerings with the system. Adult-directed efforts such as outreach and guidance are most effective if they are integrated with the rest of college structures and practices. To extend or improve provision for adults therefore requires a whole-institution approach involving finance, structures, staff development, curriculum and student support.

This document does not intend to imply that good practice in the areas discussed is relevant only to adult students. Improved guidance services, new open learning opportunities and more flexible course structures and modes of delivery will benefit students of any age. However, any significant changes in policy and practice have organisational and financial implications and there may be a variety of factors which limit developments in individual colleges. The following chapters, therefore, are intended only as a guide to assist institutions in those areas where there is the will and the possibility to initiate or improve the service for adult learners.

THE REPORT

The report is organised in three sections. The first is concerned with access issues and examines the key processes – marketing, outreach activities and educational guidance – that can still stimulate a more responsive service, promote wider adult participation and generally enhance a college's image and reputation in the community.

The second section explores issues to do with adults learning – the nature of further education provision for adults, the relevance to adults of new processes of accreditation and assessment and appropriate teaching/learning methods and approaches.

The final and longest section is concerned with policy issues. This part of the report looks first at developments to support adult learners and ensure equal opportunities throughout the institution. These chapters are followed by consideration of the roles of staff development and collaboration with other agencies in reinforcing institutional and curricular change. The section concludes with an examination of the crucial issues of quality control and resourcing in relation to college provision and services for adults.

SUMMARY

The majority of students in further education are now over 21 and their numbers are growing. In a context of new skills needs and a rapidly evolving educational system, the changing student profile is encouraging colleges to adjust their procedures and practices to create a service geared more to adults than to school leavers.

Adult learners require different procedures and approaches from those provided for 16–19-year-olds. Many re-enter education after a break or interruption, have no recent qualifications, and have a number of outside responsibilities and commitments. These characteristics have implications for the kinds of education and training programmes offered, modes of delivery, teaching/learning approaches, and the ways in which adult learners are supported in a college.

The diversity of adult motivations in returning to education and the range of their outside responsibilities requires a fundamental shift in further education away from the traditional course-driven model designed for full-time students, towards curriculum design and delivery which responds to the learning requirements of adults and fits in with their commitments.

Key characteristics of effective college provision for adults are, therefore, **institutional flexibility, a student-centred approach and curriculum design and delivery tailored to identified employer, group and individual needs.** An adult-oriented service is best achieved by policies and practices which affect the whole institution rather than piecemeal changes to bits of the system.

Key areas for college managers to consider and develop are:

MARKETING

The best practice has been achieved in colleges which not only conduct comprehensive marketing research, external liaison and promotional activities, but where all institutional procedures and practices are examined for their appropriateness to adults.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

These are essential elements in any strategy to expand or improve a college's service for adults. They not only facilitate adult access and progression: they enable a college to create two-way communication channels; make contact with different organisations and groups in the community; identify learning needs and gaps in provision and receive feedback on public perceptions and reactions.

EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Guidance is an essential support for adult learners and needs to be offered at all stages in learning – pre-access, at start of learning, throughout learning and at exit from a programme.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Colleges with a majority of adult learners are moving away from a provider-determined curriculum towards provision which responds to identified employer, group or individual learning needs. This entails tailoring education and training programmes to the needs of groups such as:

- adults in employment who require retraining and updating
- adults returning to education after a break, often involving a period of employment
- adults restarting education at a basic level
- groups with specific learning requirements (adults with special needs, etc.).

Whatever the client group, it is important to provide opportunities for continuity and progression.

ACCREDITATION AND ASSESSMENT

Adult access and progression is greatly facilitated by new accreditation and assessment schemes involving assessment of prior learning and achievement, and competence-based approaches offering opportunities for credit accumulation and transfer. These developments are particularly helpful to adults without school qualifications, and suit many learners better than traditional end-of-year examinations.

FLEXIBLE DELIVERY

Many adults can participate only on a part-time or short-term, intermittent basis. Programmes therefore need to be delivered at times, in places and in ways which suit the circumstances of participants. Unit-based or modularised programmes, open and flexible learning modes and roll-on, roll-off attendance schemes particularly assist adult learners.

TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES

The diverse learning needs and starting points of individual adult learners require teaching staff to adopt a more individualised approach which includes diagnosis, negotiation of personal learning plans and continuous assessment. Teaching staff are having to take on a greater support and facilitating role as a consequence of the spread of open and flexible learning modes enabling adults to join and leave programmes modes at different times.

Fundamental changes such as these need to be underpinned by policies on:

STUDENT SUPPORT

This is a key issue in providing education and training for adults. Adults returning to learning after a break have a wide range of support needs. They are best served in colleges which have established central units offering linked services which provide both personal support (help with finance, counselling), and learning (academic) support (educational guidance, induction, personal tutor schemes, help with study skills, literacy, numeracy and English language). Other important forms of support which encourage access and retention of adult students are: childcare facilities, separate study or social space, structural adaptations and equipment for students with special needs, recruitment of staff from ethnic minority groups.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Certain groups, such as ethnic minorities, adults with special needs and women require specific provision and support. The best practice is achieved in colleges which have adopted a set of principles which actively encourage and support the participation of these groups, reinforced by a strategy for implementation which involves the whole institution.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Colleges wishing to achieve positive and lasting changes for adult learners need a strategic staff development policy to underpin all institutional and curriculum developments affecting adult learners. This means developing in-house programmes and taking advantage of LEA funding and regional schemes to ensure that all college staff – including part-time and support staff – receive appropriate training in new areas of work with adults and providing an adult-friendly environment.

COLLABORATION

Liaison and co-operation with other institutions, agencies and organisations in areas such as staff development, curriculum design and provision, development of materials and assessment of prior learning is often the best and most cost-effective way for colleges to develop services for adults. Colleges which have established external liaison units or teams have increased their work for local firms and organisations and enhanced their reputation in the community.

EVALUATION

A key question is how provision and services for adults, much of which does not fit easily into established monitoring criteria based on staff-student ratios and outcomes such as examination results can be evaluated. Evaluation of work with adult students means devising measures which take into account their various characteristics, starting points and expectations and their range of attendance modes. New performance indicators are needed to identify quality in adult learning and its results in terms of *value added* – the less tangible but no less important outcomes such as gains in confidence. A number of colleges, LEAs and national groups are currently working on the development of measures which will adequately evaluate adult learning.

RESOURCES

Any developments towards creating a more learner-centred institution have resource implications. Current resourcing criteria do not sufficiently take into account the range and diversity of adult learning, and colleges are having to use their resources in flexible and innovative ways, through redirection of existing resources, entrepreneurial activities, or piloting new approaches such as an achievement-led resourcing. In this, as in all other areas affecting adult learners, the key is flexibility and adaptability.

opening up the college

SECTION I

MARKETING

PROMOTING THE COLLEGE

OUTREACH

GUIDANCE

1 MARKETING

Changes in educational resourcing introduced by the Education Reform Act have resulted in marketing becoming a key element in strategic planning. This chapter examines:

1.1 First principles
1.2 Market research
1.3 Product
1.4 Place
1.5 Timing and delivery
1.6 First contacts
1.7 Enrolment/registration
1.8 Price/financial arrangements
1.9 Admissions
1.10 Physical facilities

1.1 FIRST PRINCIPLES

The first requirement in marketing to adults is recognition of the number and diversity of potential markets – the fact that there are 'multiple publics' (FEU, 1985), each of which will need a different marketing approach.

The second requirement is recognition that changes in the nature of the clientele and their learning needs will mean changes in the nature of the service. It is not just a question of repackaging an existing product for non-user groups; it is a question of modifying courses and facilities and adjusting operational practices to suit new clients as well as to meet the needs of existing students. Marketing to adult clients also involves attention to a college's image, its premises, furnishings, ethos and ambience, to ensure that it is 'adult-friendly'.

Thus marketing is not a separate and distinct area of college business: it involves the workings of the whole institution. This warrants a comprehensive institutional approach.

1.2 MARKET RESEARCH

An essential first step in marketing to adults is market research:

- to monitor local education and training needs
- to identify different market segments – their specific characteristics and educational needs
- to keep pace with changes in demand

- to identify potential new markets and how the college might respond to them
- to identify the barriers and disincentives that deter non-user groups
- to analyse the effectiveness of current promotional strategies
- to conduct surveys of existing students.

To identify local learning requirements, many colleges now conduct an audit of local community learning needs. This can include:

- a community audit or profile of potential learners according to:
  - age, gender, race and disability
  - employment status
- an inter-agency, 'intelligence-gathering' exercise to identify:
  - community learning needs
  - local training needs
  - changing employment opportunities
- research activities to identify the level of awareness of college provision for adults
- compilation of feedback from local guidance networks
- audits of local firms' skills needs.

The last activity can bear dividends. One college in the north-west conducted a skills audit for building firms in the locality. This resulted in fifteen student places being created for a course in building skills, with all participants being guaranteed a job on completion.

Market research involves keeping abreast of what is going on both inside and outside a college (the former is often neglected). It requires making and maintaining contacts with external agencies, including employers and community groups; keeping up-to-date local community and business directories and mailing lists; establishing and using student databases; obtaining feedback from college staff and existing students (a valuable source of information on public perceptions, barriers to access, and actual experience of the college).

Colleges also need information on external trends for marketing purposes so that they can review and adjust their services to keep pace with educational, social and technological change. Marketing, therefore, entails keeping up-to-date with current interests and concerns so that programmes can be modified and, where necessary, repackaged. Increasing interest in green or safety issues, for example, might have a bearing on curriculum design and the way a college promotes its services.

Many colleges now have marketing units to research, compile and analyse information of this kind and incorporate findings into marketing strategies. Some have appointed marketing managers and established marketing teams or committees to look at marketing throughout the college. Others have brought in marketing consultants. Some local authorities have adopted a multi-institutional approach.

Lambeth, for example, has conducted a comprehensive cross-college marketing project in which all staff and relevant committees have been involved. The process has entailed research (local labour market, student data), analysis, dissemination and consultation with staff at the three colleges. The result of this collaborative exercise has been formulation of a corporate marketing strategy and specific strategies for each vocational area.

1.3 THE PRODUCT

In marketing terms, the 'product' provided by colleges is its range of services, including courses with identified outcomes. A marketing strategy aimed at adults needs to tailor its range of services to the expressed demands and perceived requirements of the different groups concerned. Adults usually require shorter learning programmes than 16–19-year-old students and are more concerned with updating skills, changing or re-entering careers, gaining access to higher education or pursuing new interests than with initial training for qualifications. Such requirements demand different types of courses, delivery modes and teaching styles to those generally offered to a younger cohort: for example, a short course for self-employed adults would have a different content and emphasis from a standard Business Studies course leading to an initial qualification.

Two important changes colleges are making in their provision for adults are the introduction of flexible NVQs and competence-based training, and the development of systems for the accreditation of prior learning and achievement. In the last few years, many colleges wishing to extend their provision for adults have also, after appropriate market research and in response to changed circumstances and demand, organised a range of adult-specific programmes such as short training or PICKUP courses for employers; programmes to assist women 'returners' in their transition back to paid employment; ET or other courses for the adult unemployed; adult basic education programmes; Access (to higher education) courses.

However, colleges do not cater fully for adults if they concentrate only on courses. Consultancy and the letting of premises and equipment are examples of additional services which can satisfy some adult market requirements. Other possibilities are to offer use of college catering facilities or rooms for meetings and conferences, or to buy in equipment to facilitate technical advance for smaller companies who can 'book time' for their employees. The more colleges design their services with the diversity of different market requirements in mind, the more likely they are to satisfy a diverse adult market and become a central resource in their localities. For some, it may be a question of considering the extent to which they can supply different 'brands' of their products to different client groups.

1.4 PLACE

Restricting the availability of education and training to college premises may reduce the size of potential adult markets and neglect potential areas of growth. Workplace, hotel or community centre locations may be more convenient and more attractive venues for many individuals. For colleges already operating at full capacity, delivery in other locations has the advantage of relieving pressures on accommodation.

1.5 TIMING AND DELIVERY

Many colleges have already introduced flexible entry and delivery modes as part of special training measures for young people and unemployed adults and some recent developments have reinforced this trend. Training Agency schemes, BTEC and City and Guilds vocational programmes have gradually moved away from the established day-release pattern towards a more modular, block release approach, while the system of NVQs is encouraging more flexible programme organisation and delivery.

Some adults cannot get to college at certain times, and work or family commitments often preclude the regular patterns of attendance which traditional courses demand. Open learning arrangements can help to overcome these problems, as can adjustments in the hours of certain classes.

> A college in Coventry attracts large numbers of adults to day-time classes run in spare accommodation in local primary schools, many of the students being mothers of children attending the schools. Other colleges have introduced weekend courses and 'twilight hours' classes to suit those who prefer to call in at college on their way home from work. Many colleges have introduced 'roll-on roll-off' delivery and an extended college year, both of which have assisted adult access.

Experience shows that the following also encourage adult participation:

- increases in part-time provision and resource-based learning opportunities
- continuous entry through open workshops or college-wide admissions services open throughout the year
- multi-point entry through modules or 'blocks' with built-in progression, allowing students to follow individual programmes and work at their own pace
- direct entry from outreach 'access' courses scheduled to precede starting dates of mainstream programmes
- taster courses.

1.6 FIRST CONTACTS

First impressions can be crucial in determining whether a person will use a college's services. Potential clients may be lost if it is difficult to make contact with a college or if responses to enquiries are brusque and unhelpful. Reports on adults' first contacts with education institutions (FEU, 1987) have highlighted the following as particularly off-putting: unanswered or constantly engaged telephones (often due to a dearth of outside lines); inadequately informed reception and other 'frontline' staff; poor signposting; crowded enrolment evenings for all students registering at the college.

Details such as prompt telephone answering and the appearance of the foyer can make an enormous difference to people contacting a college for the first time. Installing a telephone answering service and clear signposting in the foyer showing room numbers and the location of services such as information and guidance, need not be costly. Another measure to improve the interface between college and public would be equipping 'frontline' staff with information and training to enable them to deal adequately with enquiries.

1.7 ENROLMENT/REGISTRATION

Traditionally, enrolment at educational institutions has been designed for administrative convenience and oriented towards existing course modes. Although many colleges have modified their procedures, problems with enrolment are frequently cited by adults reporting on their experiences in returning to education. Specific problems which have been identified are:

- enrolment at fixed times restricted to a few evenings in one week
- congested enrolment locations and long waits in queues as people fill in forms, produce evidence of benefit, etc.
- hard-pressed enrolment staff more concerned with enroling students on their courses than advising them on alternatives.

These situations can result in people who are unsure of what they want or the exact level and nature of courses, making the wrong learning choices. Enrolment procedures that have been found convenient by adults include:

- enrolment over an extended period
- separate enrolment times for mature students
- postal or telephone enrolment (using credit card)
- an appointment system
- automatic re-enrolment for long courses.

One college has introduced a telephone enrolment 'helpline' which operates throughout the year.

It is important when establishing registration procedures to recognise that there is a critical difference between people who know exactly what they want to do and those who are uncertain about which course is most suitable.

The introduction of facilities such as telephone enrolment releases more staff time for people who want help and advice.

Computerised registration systems facilitate re-registration and college staff have found that former and existing students appreciate not having to fill in forms again as their details have been retained by the college. One college has found that the task of keying-in student registration can be given to reception or other frontline staff, allowing academic staff to spend more time advising new students.

1.8 PRICE/FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Pricing, which encompasses the related issue of funding, is a crucial part of the marketing 'tool-kit'. Market pricing starts with the potential customers and their respective readiness and ability to pay, not from the basis of what it costs to provide the service. Those who can afford to pay the full costs of provision need to be persuaded that it is worth their while to do so.

Some adult learning is, or will be, sponsored by employers through Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). The use of training credits or vouchers is also being piloted. However, providing the kinds of service which might prove attractive to some groups of adults can add to costs. People who are unwaged or in low-income occupations are unlikely to participate in education unless it is heavily subsidised or free at the point of delivery. For these groups, other possible sources of financial support have to be explored, including sponsorship deals where appropriate. But there are no easy answers to this when LEAs are finding it increasingly difficult to finance fee concessions and industry is warning that recession is constraining their ability to sponsor individuals and groups. Nevertheless, greater flexibility in fee structures and payment methods can result in both improved take-up and an increase in generated income.

Some colleges offer assistance in the form of:

- payment by instalment schemes
- fee reductions for certain categories of people
- 'hardship' schemes
- fixed price vouchers allowing enrolment on a specified number of courses for a specified time.

In most cases these concessions have been offered with the help of special funding or LEA steerage.

> A college in the north-east, for example, received local authority assistance to encourage the participation of low-income adults and was able to offer:
>
> - free tuition and waiver of examination fees
> - free materials and loan of books
> - free childcare for children under five
> - meal vouchers

- free public transport to and from college.

The extent to which colleges are able to offer financial assistance to students often depends on their ability to raise full fees or cost-plus fees from others; to acquire special funding, or to raise revenue from income-generating programmes and services for industry. To fulfil the principle of 'equity', therefore, may require colleges to perform some balancing acts with budgets. Some have used resources generated by popular courses to invest in provision for disadvantaged adult groups. In Richmond Community College, for instance, profits are used to offset the costs of work with older adults, people with special needs and single parents.

As part of the Students' Top-Up Loan scheme, 'Access funds' will be allocated to institutions to provide help to full-time and sandwich students aged over 19 who face financial difficulties. This will not help part-time students, and some anxieties have been expressed about the overall impact of the loan scheme on disadvantaged adult students. However, government departments are currently conducting a study of the feasibility of introducing a tax relief scheme for people paying the costs of their own further education and training for the Treasury.

1.9 ADMISSIONS

Many adults do not have the standard entry requirements (such as GCSEs) to enrol in mainstream programmes and some colleges have introduced new schemes for recognising prior learning and experience, admitting students on the basis of their potential to complete a course successfully rather than on their qualifications. Development of systems for assessing prior learning (APL) is increasing throughout post-school education as more adults without qualifications access the system. The process is considered in more detail in Chapter 7.

Some colleges now have a central access or admissions unit providing a set of integrated services such as guidance, assessment and registration. These are often staffed by access tutors who work specifically with adult students.

> Wirral Metropolitan College and community colleges such as Bradford and Ilkley and Newham have integrated access services of this kind. At Brixton College there is a Student Resource Unit which has a key member of staff co-ordinating work with adult students returning to learn. All potential learners are interviewed and an informal assessment of prior learning is undertaken at this preliminary stage.

1.10 PHYSICAL FACILITIES

When marketing to adult clients, it is important to consider the quality of the accommodation provided for delivery of college services. Some colleges appear more like schools than the kind of venue adults find appropriate for

education and training. An HMI report on PICKUP (1988) observed that much of the accommodation seen in use was 'substandard and inappropriate' for adult students. A guidance manual on implementing PICKUP (FEU, 1990) also stresses the importance of providing comfortable chairs, curtains and carpets. Other reports on adult learners in further and higher education highlight the need for a base room for adult students in colleges where 16–19-year-olds are still the majority. An HMI report on Access courses in colleges (1990), recommends that managers should try to ensure that adult students feel they belong to the college, while having a 'secure anchor in their own base'.

The provision of childcare, car parking and good refreshment facilities on site helps to remove some of the barriers which prevent some adults from attending college. This kind of upgrading of facilities can be expensive although some improvements can be self-financing. Childcare facilities, for instance, may be run as a commercial service available to the whole community, not just to college students and staff.

> At a college in Coventry, refreshment trolleys are delivered direct to short training course rooms, the cost being recovered from the price charged. There is also a general shop on site which provides a service to all students and operates as a successful commercial enterprise.

The benefits of a systematic marketing approach can be multiple. In Kingston-upon-Thames LEA: 'student hours of attendance have risen by 32 per cent in two years producing a significant rise in fee income. There has been a healthy increase on external funding and evidence of a shift in perceptions of the service'.

References

Blamire, J. & Nielsen, F. (1987) *Don't call us*, NIACE REPLAN.

FEU (1990) *Developing a marketing strategy for adult and continuing education.*

Useful Resources

FEU (1985) *Marketing further education.*

FEU (1987) *Marketing education*, Bulletin No 1.

Kotler, P. & Fox, F.A. (1985) *Strategic marketing for educational institutions*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.

Lowen, D. (1986) *Barriers to access: a report on institutional barriers*, Central and West London Open College.

McGivney, V. (1990) *Education's for other people: access to education for non-participant adults*, NIACE.

Marks, H.E.S. & Elsdon, K. (1991) *Adults in the colleges of further education*, University of Nottingham.

ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

YES/NO	ACTION

Effective marketing can increase enrolments, income and sources of funding. Have marketing personnel been appointed at a senior level in the college and are adequate resources available for market research and promotional efforts?

Are marketing plans being kept under constant review and regularly updated in collaboration with the LEA?

Are management teams, governing bodies and all college staff consulted on and actively involved in marketing strategies?

Is time allowed for staff throughout the college to consider the effectiveness of overall marketing strategies as well as strategies for different areas of college activity?

Market segmentation is essential in marketing strategies but it can lead to over-emphasis on some markets at the expense of others, and lack of attention to the overall balance of a college's work. Has sufficient attention been paid to internal coherence?

Are managers aware of the number of adults in the college and how they are spread across the institution? If there are areas with few adult students, have the reasons for this been explored?

Do existing structures and procedures encourage adults to approach the college and make use of services? Have central services been established with adult customers in mind and have there been appointments of staff to work with adults?

Are frontline staff fully briefed on the range of college services, names of staff, room numbers, etc., so that they can respond adequately to enquiries and make the right referrals?

Are the current enrolment procedures employed by the college for the institution's or the customer's convenience? Do they encourage or discourage potential students, especially 'waverers'?

Have accommodation and furnishings been reviewed for their suitability to adults and upgraded where necessary?

Have flexible timetabling and delivery modes been introduced to accommodate the diverse domestic and work commitments of adults?

Do customer-centred attitudes exist throughout the organisation? Is there sufficient awareness of the importance of first impressions and the role of all staff in public relations?

Is any training provided for support staff as well as teaching staff to assist them in their dealings with adults?

ISSUES FOR STAFF

YES/NO	ACTION

The manner, behaviour and appearance of staff help to determine public perceptions of a college and the quality of its services. Is it fully recognised that marketing is not just the function of specially appointed personnel but that all staff contribute to marketing and public relations?

Have teaching and non-teaching staff been involved in any staff development activities concerning dealing with, advising and teaching adults?

Are you actively involved, through staff and course team meetings, in planning marketing strategies for the college as a whole and marketing your particular area?

Are there mechanisms for staff to share their views with marketing teams and management regarding modifications to course content and presentation, and their ideas for new services, student recruitment and potential new markets?

2 PROMOTING THE COLLEGE

Promotional activities and publicity are an important aspect of the marketing process. This chapter considers:

2.1 The results of inadequate publicity
2.2 The role of college publicity
2.3 Contacting adult markets
2.4 Publicity within the college
2.5 The role of college staff in public relations
2.6 Monitoring promotional activity

2.1 THE RESULTS OF INADEQUATE PUBLICITY

Although publicity is generally considered a central process in marketing, until relatively recently many colleges have been content just to provide basic information on their course provision for people who know what they want. Institutions still attracting large numbers of their traditional students have not spent resources on targeting specific markets, on packaging information in different ways to suit different groups, or on finding out what communication methods will reach non-user groups or bring new business to the college. Nor have they made any serious effort to change the attitude of local communities towards the college in spite of the fact that the perception of further education as an intimidating formal education service aimed mainly at younger students is still fairly widespread. This perception often translates into a conviction of the college's physical remoteness. According to the marketing manager of a college in the south-west:

> *'We have found that the view colleges have of themselves is usually tremendously at variance with the view their customers have of the college. A lot of people in this area think the college is way up the hill over there, when it is just up the road.'*

The indications are that many colleges have not yet managed to get across to the general public the range of their services and scope of their operations. For example, research conducted by Cleveland Technical College (FEU, 1989) revealed that adults were not enroling for two main reasons: lack of awareness of what the college could offer and inaccurate perceptions of conditions of entry.

Inaccurate public perceptions of further education, compounded by poor or inappropriate publicity, can create two major problems for planners:

- an ill-informed **potential** market which will not approach the college because it does not know or has a misinformed idea about what is on offer

- an ill-informed **actual** market making the wrong choices because people do not have the right sort of information or guidance.

The result of this can be loss of both existing and potential clients.

2.2 THE ROLE OF PUBLICITY

Colleges need to give a clear message that they can and do cater for the learning needs of the adult population – whether in work, out of work or unwaged. This can be achieved by careful targeting of publicity and choice of methods, and, most of all, by word-of-mouth from satisfied customers. Effective publicity is publicity which:

- reaches its intended audience
- accurately portrays the service offered
- uses language and images which target groups can understand and with which they can identify
- conveys a positive image of the services offered and persuades target groups that they are worth expenditure of time and money.

Thus, college publicity should involve more than regular production of a standard prospectus or brochure. It should include promotional activities and materials that will simultaneously:

- dispel perceptions of the college as a formal, school-like establishment for younger age groups
- capture adults' attention and interest
- convey appropriate messages about the college as a place suitable for adults
- give an idea of the range and variety of the services offered and focus on the benefits that will result from using them
- contain information, language and images that will help to overcome identified barriers to using the service (for example, by stressing flexible timing and delivery modes; displaying photographs of different groups of adults using the college)
- contain accurate and comprehensive information (which always includes an address and telephone number for responses).

This means paying attention to the format, language and style of publicity materials; tailoring them to target audiences, and making important decisions about the amount and nature of information to be included. The importance of details such as the names/titles of college courses and services should not be underestimated. College staff have found that if they are too technical or academic they can be off-putting to some adults. This suggests that those devising publicity need to collaborate closely with colleagues on use of language, as a simple change in terminology may make all the difference to recruitment.

> For example, if a college is still perceived as a place for young people, it may be to its advantage to describe or 'brand' its services in ways that suggest that it

is more adult-oriented. 'Enterprise Training Services' (in Yorkshire) and 'South Kent Adult Training Enterprise' are examples of successful college-provided training services which deliberately employ a different name and image from mainstream provision for younger students.

2.3 CONTACTING ADULT MARKETS

One of the problems with marketing college services to adults is that there is no single contact point as there is with young entrants coming from schools, so institutions have to employ a multi-pronged approach to reach different segments of the population. This usually includes outreach contacts with different community groups and personal contacts with corporate clients. Marketing teams or units therefore need to involve liaison workers and collaborate closely with all colleagues engaged in outreach work.

The following promotional approaches have been successfully employed by many colleges:

- personal approaches to employers, chambers of commerce, TECs, trades unions and trades councils
- direct mailing to businesses on the mailing list, TECs, guidance and careers services, training managers for ET (Employment Training), other post-school education providers, employers with education schemes
- distributing publicity materials (in minority languages where necessary) to places and services used by adults (libraries, job centres, community centres, workplaces, clubs, shopping centres, places of entertainment, etc.)
- holding open days and information days (some for general public; some aimed at specific groups)
- mounting stands and exhibitions at local events, trade exhibitions, shopping centres and other places frequented by adults
- placing advertisements in local newspapers and trade press
- inserting leaflets and flyers in local press, local community magazines/journals
- visiting workplaces, community groups, volunteer bureaux, etc. and talking about college work
- directing publicity at people visiting the college to use its facilities (e.g. hairdressing salon; catering)
- targeting promotional materials at different market segments (e.g. Newham College aims different publicity at school leavers, adults needing work-related skills or general education and women 'returners').

Most colleges also ensure some media coverage through press, radio or TV, as this is an effective way of disseminating information about their services. It is well documented that many people hear about local educational opportunities via their local press so a regular flow of press releases on new developments at a college; success and 'human interest' stories, as well as advertisements and briefings on how the college has helped local businesses

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or community groups, can prove an effective method of promoting services and attracting new customers.

The timing of publicity distribution is important and colleges should avoid putting out publicity in peak holiday periods or at the end of the week (distribution on a Monday allows for an immediate response).

2.4 PUBLICITY WITHIN THE COLLEGE

The role of existing students in public relations should not be neglected. Much informal marketing is conducted through personal contacts and word-of-mouth. It has often been found that adults come to college with friends and hear about college courses and facilities through friends, relatives or colleagues. Promotional strategies need to make use of this information. For example, special incentives could be offered to those who 'bring a friend'.

Visitors and existing students can be made aware of other courses and services on offer through such means as posters and exhibitions in the foyer, corridors, cafeterias and common-rooms; social events; open days and evenings, and distribution of flyers and leaflets by tutors.

2.5 THE ROLE OF STAFF IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

The image a college presents to the public depends not only on the form and manner in which information is presented; it depends, crucially, on the people representing and working in the institution, in particular on:

- the extent to which enquirers and students are made to feel welcome
- the manner in which reception staff respond to queries and their ability to give information
- staff attitudes to particular groups and individuals (e.g. older adults, ethnic minorities).

Thus, the role of college teaching and non-teaching staff in public relations should not be underestimated as their interpersonal skills play a determining role in public perceptions of a college and the quality of a student's experience. This underlines the importance of establishing staff training programmes to assist reception, teaching and guidance support staff in their dealings with adults.

2.6 MONITORING PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Promotional activities need to be carefully planned and monitored to ensure that they are effective and meeting defined objectives. This requires management and marketing staff to identify aims and targets for promotional activity with reference to:

- the resources available for production and distribution

- the media to be employed
- the amount/number of promotional materials to be produced
- methods of distribution.

To ensure cost-effectiveness, some college marketing managers have instituted systems for examining the results of promotional activities and materials. These have included: distributing short questionnaires to samples of new users and groups on mailing lists; placing boxes for comments and suggestions in the college; circulating staff for their comments and insights into students' experience and attitudes.

Reference

FEU (1989) *The outreach college: design and implementation.*

Useful Resources

FEU (1985) *Marketing FE: a feasibility study.*

FEU (1990) *Developing a marketing strategy for adult and continuing education*

ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

YES/NO	ACTION

Have promotional activities and publicity materials been devised in accordance with an overall marketing strategy, with clearly defined objectives and targets?

Are adequate resources available for the production and distribution of promotional materials?

Are promotional activities and publicity materials regularly reviewed for their suitability and effectiveness in relation to adult markets?

Are mailing lists and directories kept up-to-date and regularly supplemented?

Has sufficient attention been paid to the role of existing students in promoting your college?

ISSUES FOR STAFF

YES/NO	ACTION

Are you aware of your own role in public relations?

Are you aware of the general range of courses and services offered by the college and have you been able to pass on this information to the students and enquirers with whom you come into contact?

Have you been invited (by marketing staff) to comment on the effectiveness of promotional materials and are there channels for you to make suggestions about new promotional activities?

Are there ways of passing to marketing personnel any insights you gain about students' reactions to publicity and the promotional methods that most attracted their interest?

3 OUTREACH

Some of the aspects of marketing colleges to adults discussed in the previous chapters, such as contacting new markets, can be defined as outreach activities. Outreach will be an essential part of a college's strategy to widen its adult student intake and offer a responsive service to the local community. This chapter considers:

3.1 What outreach entails
3.2 The benefits of outreach
3.3 Outreach development and delivery
3.4 Some key elements in outreach
3.5 Assessing outreach

3.1 WHAT OUTREACH ENTAILS

Outreach entails far more than delivering courses in locations outside the college. It involves:

- **establishing links and networking**: with other education providers, employers and employer networks, community groups, guidance agencies, organisations and individuals working with adults
- **needs analysis:** going out from the college to survey the training needs of local firms and community learning interests and needs that are not being met by education providers
- **responding:** to the expressed education and training requirements of different client groups by providing courses, consultancy and other services to suit specific needs and circumstances
- **breaking down barriers to learning:** by developing flexible entry methods, learning approaches and support structures to assist non-participant sections of the population.

3.2 THE BENEFITS OF OUTREACH

Outreach activities can have positive outcomes for both the college and its customers. They can raise the profile of a college by making local firms and communities aware of the range, extent and flexibility of its services; and they can enhance its reputation by demonstrating that it is responsive to the learning requirements of diverse client groups and offers a service of high quality.

For employers, college outreach activities can stimulate the development of training programmes tailored to specific needs. For individuals, outreach can lead to the creation of new education and training opportunities in the community, providing a flexible route back into formal education. Thus

outreach activities can open up the college and access to qualifications to groups who would not formerly have considered further education as a realistic option.

3.3 OUTREACH DEVELOPMENT WORK AND DELIVERY

There are innumerable examples of successful community outreach development work undertaken to raise a college's profile locally or to attract groups of non-participant or unemployed/unwaged adults, often with the support of special programming such as REPLAN. The results of these initiatives have been well documented (FEU, 1989; NIACE/FEU, 1990).

> Rother Valley College initiated an outreach initiative in 1987: to raise the profile of the college in the local community; to increase awareness of its potential as a local resource, and to identify and respond to community learning needs. The initiative led to the development of new programmes for people in non-user categories as well as to considerable infill into mainstream courses.

Another important aspect of college outreach is in-company work – an area that is increasing as colleges undertake more in-house training and updating, work-based assessment and consultancy for firms. In recent years, many PICKUP courses have been provided by colleges to meet the skills updating needs of large companies. HMI reports on college PICKUP activities indicate that it has resulted both from the work of LEA PICKUP officers, acting as brokers between colleges and firms, and from direct contacts established between colleges and local employers, often following surveys of local industry or visits to firms to identify their training needs. This underlines the key importance of the marketing process discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

College outreach work with companies has not been confined to tailor-made courses; it sometimes involves secondment of college staff to work with firms on particular areas of expertise.

> In one example, a retail company in Gloucestershire has bought ten hours a week of a college staff member's time, for in-house management training and consultancy.

3.4 SOME KEY ELEMENTS IN OUTREACH

A policy

Outreach needs to relate to a college's overall objectives and targets. Thus, it is advisable for colleges to have a specific policy, included in the mission statement, setting out clearly why outreach activities are undertaken and what outcomes are anticipated, and stressing that outreach is integral rather than marginal to college work.

In one London college, each department is expected to be involved in outreach and to commit a percentage of its curriculum budget to provision in local centres.

Appointments

To be effective, outreach requires the appointment of at least one full-time staff member with responsibility for it (entitled, in different colleges, 'outreach co-ordinator', 'community liaison officer', 'access tutor'). Such workers should quickly become familiar with the locality and different local agencies and be adept at networking, approaching people at different levels and negotiating with organisations and prospective learners. Outreach work is highly skilled and should not be underrated or undervalued by institution-based staff.

Outreach workers attached to a large institution can feel isolated and marginalised, especially if they do not enjoy secure employment status and full integration with institution-based staff. In-house staff development programmes can provide a valuable opportunity for outreach staff to pass on their skills and insights to institution-based college staff, many of whom are increasingly coming into contact with predominantly adult clients.

Organisational support

The mutual benefits than can result from the work a college does with local employers and the community justify allocating adequate resources to outreach activities. Successful outreach depends on sufficient staff time being allowed for contacts to be established and activities to be developed, as these are crucial to long-term results. PICKUP work, for example, often requires protracted college-employer negotiations and therefore a long lead time. In-company work may also require open learning approaches to be developed to meet the needs of shift workers. Development workers need full college back-up to enable them to conduct these essential preliminary activities. In some colleges, support takes the form of a central unit co-ordinating outreach activities and providing secretarial services, office space, telephones and facilities such as photocopying.

Networking and collaboration

Networking is essential in outreach not just as a means of making links with other agencies and organisations but to provide a structure for information-sharing, co-ordination and co-operation. Successful outreach requires collaboration between different agencies and sectors – a factor discussed in more detail in Section 3. Many colleges have engaged in multiple inter-sectoral links in providing outreach, educational and other services for adults.

Barry College of Further Education, for instance, administers and provides outreach courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications at local adult education centres and RAF St Athan.

Use of non-educational venues

Most colleges have some outcentres which facilitate local access to education and training, and the use of non educational venues for course delivery is now common. As well as workplaces, the following have all been used by colleges for delivery of outreach programmes:

- hotels
- community centres
- village and church halls
- working men's clubs
- libraries
- schools
- local advice centres
- drop-in centres for the unemployed
- sports and leisure clubs
- voluntary organisation premises
- pubs
- mobile units
- private rooms (for disabled, etc.).

An integrated curriculum

Providing education and training for new adult learners in non-formal learning environments often involves some negotiation of the curriculum and programmes designed and presented in forms that suit the consumer. There is a growing view that outreach courses provided for adults in outreach venues should not be 'static' but should be fully integrated, through progression possibilities, with the rest of a college's work. According to one college principal: 'Outreach will only really work if the people involved value what they are doing and do not view it as time-spending or second-rate. This means linking outreach strongly with mainstream work, for instance through a modular approach leading to NVQs.'

> In the Outreach College Project conducted at Cleveland Technical College, a number of self-standing modules with a 'design fit' to modular units offered in mainstream programmes were developed, enabling new adult learners to make a smooth transition from community-based study to work in the main college. It is important to help adults make this transition as community-based education is often very different in style and content from education/training provided in a formal education institution.

Evaluation

Outreach work is innovative and developmental, and continuing evaluation is needed to allow lessons to be learnt about the effectiveness of approaches; objectives to be modified, and appropriate indicators of performance to be devised.

3.5 ASSESSING THE RESULTS OF OUTREACH

In the interests of embedding good practice, many colleges regularly evaluate the results of outreach activities both outside and inside the

institution. This has usually been conducted by a central unit at the college, e.g. Access Unit, Marketing and Research Unit, with the results used, as at Newham Community College, to inform the planning and modification of college procedures and practice.

The following questions might be explored in an assessment of college outreach work:

- Why was outreach initiated? (In response to requests from sections of the community? In response to institutional policy? Because special funding was available?) The answer to this question will have a strong bearing on the effectiveness and permanence of initiatives.
- What is the extent of outreach work undertaken? What sections of the community are being reached?
- What record is kept of the work and how is the information shared?
- Have the aims been achieved? If not, what factors have impeded progress?
- Have the aims been changed in any way, and, if so, where has this taken the work, the community, the workers and the institution?
- Has the outreach work resulted in any detectable changes: (a) within the community (attitudes to learning; perceptions of the college; progression to other learning or employment opportunities; personal or community development); (b) within the institution (attitudes of staff; changes in methods, procedures, learning approaches, etc.)
- Has the outreach work resulted in a significant difference in the college's relationship with the community?
- What conclusions can be drawn from outreach experiences and in what ways can the work be consolidated, modified or extended?

References

FEU (1989) *The outreach college: design and implementation.*

NIACE REPLAN/FEU (1990) *Drawing on experience: REPLAN projects review.*

Useful Resources

NIACE REPLAN (1987) *Curriculum development and institutional change in further and higher education.*

ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

	YES/NO	ACTION
Is college outreach work adequately valued and resourced?		
Do outreach activities extend beyond piloting of courses in local venues?		
Are they a 'bolt-on', marginal aspect of college work or are they fully integrated with the college's overall objectives?		
What methods of integrating outreach have been developed?		
Is outreach co-ordinated and conducted by specially appointed staff?		
Are outreach co-ordinators and workers fully backed up by institutional (administrative, organisational, secretarial) support?		
Have any staff development programmes been developed to assist outreach staff in networking, making contacts, dealing with people at different levels and working in non-educational environments?		
Do outreach staff have secure employment status and do they have the same opportunities for training and advancement as institution-based staff?		
Do in-house staff development activities provide an opportunity for outreach staff to pass on their knowledge and insights to institution-based staff?		
How are responses to outreach formalised? What mechanisms exist to enable outreach staff to feed back local information and learning needs to the college and facilitate the development of appropriate responses?		
When developing its outreach activities does your college recognise the value of collaborating with other organisations with different roles and strengths?		
Where and to whom are outreach activities accountable? Have any mechanisms been established to monitor and evaluate outreach activities on a regular basis?		

ISSUES FOR STAFF

	YES/NO	ACTION
Do outreach staff feel part of the college and that they are backed up by adequate institutional support?		
Are outreach staff actively participating in networks to establish or maintain the college's focus as a local resource?		
Have outreach staff received any preparation or training for making contact with outside groups; identifying local learning needs; negotiating with people at different levels and working in non-educational environments?		
Do outreach staff feel there are adequate channels for passing information back to the college so that appropriate responses can be made?		
Are the skills required in outreach sufficiently recognised and valued by institution-based staff?		
Do outreach workers have opportunities for passing on their knowledge and expertise to institution-based staff?		
Are outreach staff actively involved in monitoring and evaluating the results of their activities? Where and to whom do they report?		

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4 GUIDANCE

Guidance is an essential support for adult learners, particularly those who have not been in an educational environment for many years. The proliferation of courses and accrediting agencies can lead to confusion and make planning a personal study programme difficult. As patterns of education and training delivery and the range of providers become more varied, decentralised and complex, so the need for guidance increases. This chapter examines:

4.1 The nature of guidance
4.2 The role of guidance
4.3 The benefits of guidance
4.4 The stages of guidance
4.5 College guidance provision
4.6 The importance of providing independent guidance
4.7 Contacts and networks
4.8 Requirements and resource implications

4.1 THE NATURE OF GUIDANCE

There are three broad kinds of guidance, which may be offered individually or in combination:

- educational guidance, relating to learning options, approaches and routes
- vocational guidance, relating to career issues and choice
- personal guidance, relating to matters such as finance, accommodation, health, welfare and domestic issues.

Educational guidance, with which this chapter is chiefly concerned, has been defined as embracing seven activities: informing, advising, counselling, assessing, enabling, advocating and feedback (UDACE, 1986). In some contexts these activities are offered by a single agency but more often they are provided by a network of agencies or individuals.

The basic principles on which educational guidance should be based have been identified, namely that it should be:

- client-centred
- confidential
- accessible
- freely available
- well-publicised
- impartial in the advice it gives
- capable of influencing curriculum development (UDACE, 1986).

4.2 THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE

Guidance in an institution has a dual role:

- to help students (individually or in groups) to make appropriate education and training decisions and learn successfully
- to help education and training providers to develop their curricula, procedures and structures in accordance with the needs, wishes and interests identified during the guidance process.

A related function of a good guidance service is to monitor users – to identify **who** they are, their **learning requirements**, and any **barriers** to learning they may experience.

4.3 THE BENEFITS OF GUIDANCE

To the learner

Adults may become aware that they need help to broaden their horizons and even though they have not identified specific requirements, may feel that they could benefit from education. Others may know what they want to do but lack the information needed to start out on the learning process. Effective guidance enables such people to undertake a period of study successfully by:

- raising awareness of new opportunities
- enlarging perceptions of what education has to offer
- clarifying goals and identifying possible directions
- helping to evaluate personal, educational and vocational development to date
- identifying learning requirements and the most appropriate ways of meeting them
- providing support during learning.

To the institution

For colleges, a guidance service can be a mechanism for implementing policy as set out in a mission statement and strategic plan (for example, policies to do with access, adult learners or equal opportunities). Guidance also has a role in institutional and curriculum development through the process of feedback. A guidance service can ensure that educational resources are used in an appropriate and cost-effective way by:

- identifying public perceptions of a college and the barriers to participation in college programmes
- reducing the likelihood of individuals enroling on unsuitable programmes and dropping out (one college survey found that an average of 40 per cent of unwaged adult students dropped out because they had enrolled on unsuitable courses)
- acting as a central information point for college management and staff; potential and actual students; local employers; external guidance and career services; other providers and agencies that wish to feed information to the college and its students.

A college guidance service can be crucial in conveying labour market and other local information to further education institutions. In this way, local labour market needs can be recognised and appropriate training courses developed. By responding to the expressed needs of local clients, colleges will be making good use of their capital-intensive resources.

4.4 STAGES OF GUIDANCE

Guidance should be provided at all stages of the learning process: pre-entry, throughout learning, and on exit from a course or programme.

Pre-entry

First-time enquirers at colleges are sometimes left to receptionists without the necessary information and are obliged to make decisions independently of any guidance, although many adults:

- are not aware of all learning opportunities provided in a college
- are not familiar with college structures and procedures
- are not able to identify the most appropriate learning route for them.

Potential learners, particularly those who have not participated in educational activity since leaving school, may need access to information and advice on:

- local education and training opportunities
- skill shortages and employment opportunities
- services relating to assessment in or out of the workplace, the accreditation of prior learning, portfolio preparation, careers counselling, c.v. preparation or updating
- other agencies specialising in careers education and training
- accreditation possibilities and requirements.

Information alone is not enough. Many adults returning to education will need initial help in identifying their current learning interests and needs; in assessing the right level at which to embark on a course; in identifying previous experiential learning, and in making the right education and training choices.

Throughout learning

Guidance offered at entry and throughout a programme of study can help students to:

- join the right programme at the right level
- pursue and complete a programme of learning effectively
- review and assess progress and set future goals.

Modularisation and the growth of open learning is creating a demand for continuous guidance. In some higher education colleges, where credit accumulation and modular systems are the norm, guidance is embedded in the curriculum.

At exit

This is an equally important part of the guidance process as students may require careers advice on leaving a course, or guidance on the next education or training step to take. Good exit guidance will therefore help students to make a successful transition to other areas of education, employment or other situations.

4.5 COLLEGE GUIDANCE PROVISION

Guidance provision varies widely in colleges: in some, guidance is considered a normal day-to-day rather than specialised function of teaching staff and there are no special arrangements. Many offer some courses for adults with built-in guidance (e.g. Access or Return to Learn courses) or, like higher education institutions, have introduced a personal tutor scheme. Others offer a separate guidance service or guidance linked with a range of other learner support services within a central unit.

> Gloucester College of Arts and Technology, for example, plans to combine access, guidance, admissions and Assessment of Prior Learning services in an open plan environment next to the Open Learning Centre, with space for private counselling available.

> Some colleges also have mobile information and guidance units, such as caravans, which take the service out to potential clients in local firms, community centres or isolated villages. In addition to college advisory services at Merthyr Tydfil Technical College, for example, the Merthyr RESCUE bus will be used as a mobile information service throughout the district. Feedback from this service will enable the college to identify further educational and training needs.

Opinions differ on the form a guidance service should take. One principal believes that a separate service will only benefit existing students as: 'people won't wander into a place like this looking for educational guidance'. She maintains that it is more effective to develop courses for adults with guidance as an integral element. Nevertheless, in some colleges which have established an integrated admissions, guidance and assessment of prior learning service, staff have noticed an increase in adult enrolments and greater retention rates. At Preston College which has instituted a co-ordinated approach to admissions and guidance, there has been a substantial increase in adult full-time students: 'from virtually none two years ago to 400 this year'. This raises a question about the purpose of the college guidance service: is it just to facilitate inward referrals or does it also provide advice on opportunities outside the institution?

4.6 PROVIDING INDEPENDENT, IMPARTIAL GUIDANCE

Staff at a college in Cambridge have found that many adults are wary of electronic systems such as TAPS and prefer to discuss learning options with an 'honest broker' who has information on all the opportunities available. A college needs to be clear about whether it is able to provide such an

independent guidance role (i.e. provide a service for those who may choose to learn elsewhere), or whether the advice it offers relates solely to the institution's own services. Understandably, most colleges may prefer to offer guidance which relates to their own provision, with the dual role of helping learners and contributing to the college curriculum and management development processes. Not all colleges will be able or ready to offer a full, free independent advice service to all users, although there are advantages in doing so, for, in the long term such impartiality is in the interests of the institution, whose public credibility will be enhanced by a reputation for 'client-centredness'. Maintaining the independence of the guidance service within the institution would require commitment at the highest level if the natural territorial and financial imperatives of institutional life are to be overcome.

4.7 CONTACTS AND NETWORKS

To fulfil their information-giving and referral role, guidance staff need to make links with other agencies. Sufficient time should be built into their timetables for this purpose, and, where a formal educational guidance network exists, they should be encouraged to participate.

> In one city, all four colleges are represented on the local guidance service steering group and each has appointed a senior member of staff to co-ordinate guidance internally. The colleges plan to have their own guidance units and an internal network which will feed them information which will in turn be passed to the local guidance service. The advantage of such a system is that it is designed to receive and act on both external and internal feedback from the guidance process.

4.8 REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Key elements in an effective college guidance service for adults are:

- close collaboration between a college and external agencies and between staff throughout the institution. (This implies the existence of mechanisms for dialogue and exchange of information between agencies and, within the college, across departments and disciplines.)
- provision of an environment in which a client can feel comfortable and talk in confidence
- a system for confidential record-keeping
- a service of personal support which offers facilities for further guidance and counselling and, where possible, help with basic and study skills
- a system of monitoring and evaluation. It is critically important to develop qualitative, as well as quantitative, indicators and to check that other performance indicators within the institution do not exert unintended pressures to undermine the quality or accessibility of guidance

- staff development to underpin guidance in the curriculum and as a separate service.

All these requirements have staffing and resource implications. Some colleges have redistributed existing resources to establish a separate guidance and counselling service, usually with one full-time staff member supported by other staff often working in a part-time capacity. In other institutions a number of staff play a part in the guidance process.

> For example, a college in Lancashire has formed an 'Adult Liaison Team' which co-ordinates support and guidance for adult learners across different subject departments, and liaises with external agencies to ensure student support at all stages of the learning process.

Whatever the initial outlay, most colleges which have invested in guidance for its adult students claim that it more than compensates for costs by:

- increasing enrolments and retention rates
- enhancing client satisfaction
- extending community, employer and education provider links
- promoting the college image and status.

Reference

UDACE (1986) *The challenge of change: developing educational guidance for adults.*

Useful Resources

Oakeshott, M. (1990) *Educational guidance and curriculum change,* FEU/UDACE.

UDACE (1989) *Delivering educational guidance for adults: a handbook fo policymakers, managers and practitioners.*

ISSUE FOR MANAGERS

YES/NO	ACTION

Is the importance and value of educational guidance to adult learners, and ultimately to the college, fully recognised?

Is guidance available to all adult students at all stages of their learning?

Where is guidance located in your college? Is it a separate service, embedded in the curriculum, or both?

Who provides guidance in your college? Are there adequate mechanisms for communication between teaching staff and those involved in the guidance process (Access tutors, personal tutors, student counsellors)?

Do staff development programmes include training in guidance and counselling skills? Is such training provided not only for the staff directly involved, but also for other staff in your college?

Are there mechanisms within your college for receiving and responding to feedback on its provision and services?

Do managers receive a regular flow of updated information on responses to college courses and services and on the work of other local education providers?

Is your college a member of a local educational guidance network?

Does your college have a policy, clearly endorsed by all managers, on the impartiality of the information and guidance offered to prospective and actual learners?

Are there adequate facilities for confidential interviews?

Is there a clear and generally understood policy on the maintenance of confidential records, identifying what is confidential and who has access to it? Is the policy understood by students as well as staff?

Is there a mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of guidance provision? Do institutional performance indicators recognise guidance as a legitimate activity or do they drive attention and resources to other areas of work?

ISSUES FOR STAFF

YES/NO	ACTION

All staff in a college may be involved, formally or informally, in giving guidance.

Do you have:

- counselling and listening skills and the ability to advise and guide people in making appropriate choices?
- knowledge of the programmes, progression and accreditation routes available within the college?
- knowledge of all agencies involved in guidance networks so that they are aware of what help is available outside the college?
- knowledge of the range of local education services and provision?
- understanding of local employment patterns, skills shortages and trends?
- the ability to select the most appropriate agency or service to meet individual learning needs?

Adults often expect a course of action to be selected for them and need assistance to help them identify the appropriate course of action. Do you encourage clients to make their own decisions and clarify for themselves their learning needs and most appropriate ways of meeting them?

SECTION II

learning issues

PROVISION AND CURRICULUM ISSUES

ACCREDITATION

ASSESSMENT

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

5 PROVISION AND CURRICULUM ISSUES

The delegation of budgeting to colleges means that they can now determine many of their own administrative and financial arrangements and make them more supportive of courses for adults. This chapter considers:

5.1 Adapting to change
5.2 Striking a balance
5.3 Categories of provision for adults
5.4 Training and retraining
5.5 Vocational access courses
5.6 Academically-qualifying courses
5.7 Basic skills
5.8 Co-ordinating provision
5.9 Anticipating new education and training needs

5.1 ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Further education has already significantly adapted its provision to the demands generated by changing economic and local circumstances. Growth areas include skills updating, courses for labour market 'returners', and working with local employers and other agencies to combat skills shortages and rising unemployment. One college in the south-west, for example, is training unemployed individuals to A-Level standard to work in tourist parks.

Another college activity that has increased is support for local enterprise and small business growth in line with the requirements of TECs. Some colleges are now offering consultancy services for people starting their own business, including advice on financial management and use of specialist college facilities.

Programme design and delivery

These developments have been accompanied by changes in programme design and delivery. To accommodate local skills needs and the growing demand from adults for short courses, colleges are moving towards a more client-centred approach incorporating needs-analysis, tailor-made programmes and learner support. Some colleges have adopted a system which involves planning with all adult students, whatever their motive for learning or planned outcome, a negotiable curriculum entitlement and an individual action plan which takes account of their prior learning.

> A college in Yorkshire has developed a scheme whereby all adult learners follow a personally tailored programme, supported and facilitated by systems of induction, modularisation and open learning. Other colleges have instituted 'learner contracts': negotiated plans describing study content, outcomes and

progression. In such schemes, identification of learning needs is a priority not only at the pre-entry and induction stages but at subsequent stages throughout the learning experience or programme, as learners' perceptions, aims and objectives frequently change.

Adaptation to adult markets has therefore involved colleges in a general shift towards greater flexibility. Many now offer taster sessions, 'pick and mix' provision and drop-in facilities in areas such as numeracy, IT and computing, particularly to assist adult clients. In addition, the time constraints experienced by many adults, together with growing demand for short training programmes, have encouraged many college departments to repackage parts of their courses for self-study and to restructure some of their long programmes into a series of units which can be completed to suit individual needs and circumstances. This has the added advantage of enabling clients to buy only the units required rather than complete training programmes.

Some colleges have totally reorganised their provision.

At a college in the north-east, all full-time programmes are being modularised; a common core is being developed for BTEC National; 'pick and mix' programmes are planned to include A- and A/S-Levels, BTEC and City and Guilds; and GCSE, CPVE and BTEC are to be combined into a single programme. Another college is developing an open access and 'achievement-led' unified education and training system largely aimed at adult students. This involves modularisation of the whole curriculum in order to create a unit-based credit system which seeks to link NVQs, the national curriculum, TVEI and records of achievement.

Such fundamental changes in the structure of provision, curriculum design and delivery necessitate a major shift towards learner services. These are discussed in Chapter 9.

5.2 STRIKING A BALANCE

Decisions about what provision to make for adults will be in accordance with a college's mission statement and strategic plan, and informed by local circumstances and market research. For those institutions considering extending provision for adults, simply providing courses on demand may not be the best strategy since it could lead to lack of progression and duplication. It could also lead to groups being excluded and a failure to gain new markets. It is advisable, therefore, to try and strike a balance between the principle of equity and meeting market demand. Some colleges have an 'entitlement policy' enabling them to respond within a common curriculum framework both to requests for short full-cost-recovery courses and to the learning needs of disadvantaged students.

When considering developing new provision for adults, it can be helpful for colleges to start by undertaking an audit of their existing provision –

drawing up a curriculum map, and assessing the mix of formal and non-formal learning opportunities, including short courses, non-course activity, part-time and evening provision. This activity may reveal some hitherto unnoticed gaps or imbalances.

5.3 CATEGORIES OF PROVISION FOR ADULTS

The Further Education Unit (1989) has classified provision for adults within the following categories:

- work-centred (courses largely determined by employers for employees and purely relevant to a specific area of employment)
- work-focused (courses designed to qualify people for entry to particular types of occupation)
- work-enabling (courses designed to help people enter or re-enter the labour market)
- work-related (courses aiming to enhance the position of particular groups within the labour market, e.g. minorities)
- academically-qualifying (e.g. courses facilitating progression to higher education)
- community-related (provision designed to support community activities which may or not be employment-related but which have a role in development or regeneration of communities)
- leisure-related (courses which may or may not include skills relevant to the world of work).

The last two of these categories are often provided by colleges with adult education departments and those with community outreach facilities.

The first category, work-centred courses, is an important and fast-growing aspect of college provision for adults.

5.4 TRAINING AND RETRAINING

For individuals

Colleges are already providing substantial training and retraining for groups of adults, including courses for labour market 'returners', often with support from local industry worried about their pool of labour. A college in Cambridge, for example, has developed courses for women returners each of whom is sponsored and provided with a work placement by a local employer.

The system of training credits currently being piloted in some areas is designed to increase participation in training. If the scheme is successful, and extended on a wide scale to adults, it could increase demand for flexible training programmes.

For corporate clients

In order to provide cost-effective and relevant training, many colleges now allocate resources to identifying and analysing the training needs of local firms. This requires staff to have some knowledge of the industry concerned and their existing training programmes so that they can judge how these can be modified to meet new circumstances and conditions. For example, some courses may need to be modified to incorporate up-to-date information technology knowledge and skills, particularly in those subject and occupational areas where IT has had a relatively recent impact.

Many colleges have developed updating courses in response to local employer needs, and HMI reports on this kind of provision have noted that an increasing number are providing tailor-made courses for employers, both in colleges and workplaces. There are a number of advantages for colleges in providing PICKUP courses: they can promote enterprise and generate income, improve a college's public image, and increase the technical and teaching expertise of college staff.

5.5 VOCATIONAL ACCESS COURSES

The categories of provision defined by FEU as 'work-focused', 'work-enabling' and 'work-related' could also be described as vocational access courses. Many colleges have developed this type of provision after research and consultation in the community. Vocational access courses include:

- office, secretarial and IT skills (offering RSA or other single-skill certificates)
- professional access (e.g. preparation for police examinations, entrance to student nursing)
- 'return to work' (core skills, personal effectiveness, job search, vocational courses, job tasters)
- courses for women (to prepare them for entry to male-dominated occupational areas, e.g. women into engineering)
- courses specially designed for people with special needs and members of ethnic communities (Pursaill, 1990).

5.6 ACADEMICALLY-QUALIFYING COURSES

Vocational access courses are often the first step towards gaining a qualification. Colleges have done a lot in recent years to open up a route to qualifications for adults who left school without O- or A-Levels or GCSEs. Many have developed Return to Learning or 'Gateway' courses which prepare students for more advanced programmes, and the introduction of national vocational qualifications and other unit-based vocational awards has particularly helped those adults whose commitments preclude devoting a long time to study. These and other new types of accreditation are discussed in Chapter 6.

In collaboration with higher education institutions, many colleges also offer Access courses to help adults without A-Levels enter higher education. One Principal, however, has found that adult students still prefer A-Levels which they perceive as having more kudos and status.

> In one area, a modular A-Level entitled 'the Wessex Curriculum' is being piloted by a consortium of LEAs. The new format is thought to have a number of advantages over the traditional A-Level and, if more widely adopted, could prove popular with adults.

5.7 BASIC SKILLS

Provision of vocational training has been a major policy objective of further education and, until recently, this was reflected in resource allocation and styles of provision, with higher level work being given priority. Now the traditional division between 'education' and 'training' is becoming increasingly irrelevant for several reasons:

- concentration on training in specific skills can be a short-sighted policy. The accelerated pace of technological change means that training in specific skill areas may be quickly out-of-date and it is difficult to predict which skills will be needed in the future
- skills shortages will be best met if there is a pool of educated people able to adapt and retrain quickly.

> *'Education, training and retraining are part of a continuum and long-term solutions to the nation's needs will be based on this realisation. If you simply train people to be short-order cooks all you get is short-order cooks' (Austin, 1990).*

To develop the flexible and adaptable workforce needed in the 1990s requires a curriculum in which basic educational skills are integral rather than areas of secondary importance. Over 50 per cent of the adult population have not participated in education or training since leaving school, and many need to improve their abilities in reading, writing, everyday numeracy, study skills and problem-solving. For example, to achieve the occupational competence and standards of performance required to achieve many vocational qualifications, people need good numeracy and communication skills. Good communication and numeracy are also increasingly required in the workplace as new working practices and procedures are introduced. Colleges can meet this need by providing core education courses on main college sites, in out-centres, or on employers' premises. Those with an established basic education team can use existing staff skills in their work both inside and outside the college, helping individual adults to acquire vocational qualifications and employers to retrain and update the skills of their staff.

In short, to fully respond to the diverse learning needs of employers and different adult markets, colleges need to consider whether they are providing a broad-based, flexible curriculum which offers:

- a core of general and basic education skills
- help in adjusting to changing work patterns and skill needs
- opportunities to maximise personal development, skills acquisition and achievements.

5.8 CO-ORDINATING PROVISION

The essential point is that these kinds of provision should be interlinked, with clear progression routes. This requires colleges to provide a coherent structure of basic and post-basic learning opportunities and underlines the importance of intra-college collaboration and co-ordination of subject areas.

> Richmond Community College successfully developed, with ALBSU support, a range of intermediate courses and guidance services to enable adult basic education students to transfer to many different areas of mainstream provision.

It is also essential that initial learning programmes for groups provided in outreach venues be linked to opportunities in all appropriate curriculum areas within a college. In work with adults, particularly that undertaken outside the main college site, there is always a danger of separateness or marginalisation which, in the long term, can be detrimental to overall co-ordination and cohesion of provision, not to mention the waste of opportunities to disseminate newly-acquired staff expertise and skills throughout an institution.

It is in the overall interests of the college, as well as its customers, to co-ordinate provision, especially if there are areas where staff are developing new professionalism and expertise. For example, training and updating courses for adults require high-level professional skills in administration, financial management, marketing, curriculum design and delivery. It is important to ensure that the knowledge and skills acquired benefit the rest of college work. This has not always been the case, as suggested in a recent report on PICKUP in LEA colleges which stresses the need for all further education provision to be part of the same strategic planning process:

> *'The development of one area of provision cannot be carried out separately from other areas, since the processes involved relate to all provision and the use of resources – staff, accommodation, equipment and finance – in one area is certain to affect another.'*

An HMI report on PICKUP provision in Wales also concluded that a more co-ordinated approach is needed both at college and LEA level, with PICKUP activities fully integrated into the overall curriculum:

> *'Reliance on a small group of staff working in relative isolation will not ensure continuity of provision or promote the level of growth necessary to achieve the overall aims of PICKUP' (HMI, 1989).*

5.9 ANTICIPATING NEW EDUCATION AND TRAINING NEEDS

In an increasingly competitive context, colleges have to be flexible and ready to adapt the education/training they offer to meet the needs of growth sectors and changing regulations. For example, some training programmes will have to comply with new EC directives or technical standards.

In the preparation for 1992, the original focus on business and commerce has shifted and now more attention is being paid to social and cultural considerations. By the end of 1992, over 300 topics are to be harmonised across EC member states, including pensions, trade union rights and retraining. This presents colleges with an opportunity to review and update their curriculum in a number of ways, for example:

- By encouraging schemes for vocational training and work experience in Europe. This has already started in a number of colleges, many of which are increasing collaborative links with European institutions and exchanging staff and students.
- By seeing how the European dimension could be built into existing courses to give clients and individual students more information about the EC and specific member states.
- By incorporating in specific training programmes for firms, general information on the forthcoming changes and specific information on how this will affect their particular specialism.
- By providing short courses or briefings on specific countries, their laws and social systems, to local businesses. (During the 1991 summer term, the Royal College of Dean College will offer a series of breakfast cultural briefings covering all the countries of the EC.)
- By reviewing European language courses and teaching methodologies. Language modules could be added to a variety of existing courses and, as trade within the community grows, language programmes might be developed around individual needs. Short courses could be developed to help firms and individual workers needing specific language skills and information. For example, groups such as HGV drivers might require training in a specific vocabulary across a range of languages.

  At the Royal College of Dean, a staff member has successfully initiated German courses for employees of a local tyre firm which is increasing its business with Germany – an initiative facilitated by the fact that the company's director is a member of the college governor team.

- By reviewing 'English as a Foreign Language' courses. If significant numbers of people choose to move to Britain, they might need English language courses and cultural information about Britain.
- By reviewing the possibility of marketing courses on a community-wide basis.

References

Austin, M. (1990) *Further education and industry: a partnership for the new decade.*

FEU (1989) *The strategic planning of further education.*

FEU (1990) *Implementing PICKUP in LEA colleges under the Education Reform Act 1988.*

HMI (1989) *A survey of PICKUP provision in the further and higher education colleges in Wales.*

Pursaill, J. (1990) *Flexible access to vocational qualifications*, NIACE REPLAN.

Useful Resources

Association of Principals of Colleges *A European further education partnership*, c/o Middlesex Polytechnic, London N17 8HR.

Association of Principals of Colleges *Vocational education and training for the single European market*, c/o Middlesex Polytechnic, London N17 8HR.

Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative (1990) *Better basic skills, better work: cases in point*, ALBSU.

FEU (1989) *Towards a framework for curriculum entitlement.*

UK Centre for European Education *European vocational education: a pack for FE colleges.* From UK Centre for European Education, Seymour House, Seymour Mews, London W1H 9PE.

ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

	YES/NO	ACTION
Has your college conducted a curriculum audit to assess the extent and nature of its adult provision and to ensure that it is providing an adequate, equitable and quality service to the local community?		
Is it accepted that adult learning is not polarised between general or leisure courses and work-related training but involves the whole curriculum range? Does your college offer a wide range of provision for adults, including basic education, introductory 'return to learn' programmes, vocational access programmes, work-related programmes, Access (to higher education) programmes and programmes for specific groups of adults?		
Has an entitlement policy been drawn up to ensure that specific groups can participate?		
Have programmes been designed and delivered in ways that take account of the needs and circumstances of different adult markets? For example, has your college restructured any of its provision into modules, study blocks or self-study units in order to create maximum flexibility of access and progression possibilities?		
Has your college appointed staff to co-ordinate adult continuing education within the college and to work on curriculum planning and development for adult students?		
Have your staff been given time for the development of new course provision in occupational or industrial sectors where there is evidence of local needs or new market opportunities?		
Has your college developed its capacity to deliver successful, full-cost adult training and updating to employers for their employees, with a view to such programmes becoming self-financing?		
Commercial clients paying commercial rates expect quality products. Are training programmes up-to-date, well prepared and presented, with all materials professionally designed?		
Has your college adapted its provision to economic, social and technological change?		
Have courses been modified to incorporate appropriate and up-to-date information technology knowledge and skills, particularly in subject and occupational areas on which IT has had a recent impact?		
Have your staff been given time to update and redesign the curriculum, for example, to incorporate IT or language modules?		
Does your College have a well planned and integrated language policy? Has there been a review of language teaching methodology?		

	YES/NO	ACTION
Do adults participating in vocational provision also have access to support provision in areas such as study skills, numeracy and communication skills?		
Are programmes such as basic education and those delivered in workplace and other outreach locations isolated from college 'mainstream' work? Have steps been taken to ensure that curriculum areas such as basic education, education for personal effectiveness and study skills are fully integrated with other college provision?		
Is all provision at your college co-ordinated to provide progression routes for students and to ensure that expertise acquired in one area can benefit other areas of a college's work?		
In establishing provision for adult markets, has your college taken account of the work of other education and training providers?		

ISSUES FOR STAFF

YES/NO	ACTION

Are you contributing to curriculum development for adults? Are you actively involved, through staff development activities and membership of course and marketing teams, in regularly reviewing the curriculum and designing new provision that responds to the needs of diverse adult groups?

Have you been granted time to modify or redesign the curriculum in response to changing demands and needs?

Are you satisfied that sufficient channels and opportunities exist within your college to enable you to translate emerging demands and responses to existing provision into new course provision?

Is there an adequate system of referral to help adults take advantage of all areas of college provision?

Is there collaboration across departmental and subject boundaries to ensure co-ordination of provision and progression links for students? Are you able to help adult students move from one area or level of provision to another?

6 ACCREDITATION

In the past, adults, particularly those unable to devote long periods to training, had few opportunities to acquire vocational certification. Recent developments are transforming this situation and further education is playing an important role in helping adults to gain vocational qualifications. This chapter considers:

6.1 Modular and unit-based systems and assessment of competence
6.2 Credit Accumulation and Transfer schemes
6.3 Records of Achievement
6.4 The advantages to adults of the new accreditation arrangements
6.5 The changes required to implement new accreditation systems

6.1 MODULAR AND UNIT-BASED SYSTEMS

There has been a marked shift in vocational training towards unit-based or modular programmes, assessment of competence and credit accumulation. City and Guilds, for example, offer modular programmes, while BTEC offers certification for successful completion of course units and groups of units and is moving away from awards based on types of course and duration of study towards awards defined in terms of outcomes. Major changes in methods of assessment have also been ushered in by the system of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) according to which competences defined and agreed with specific industries are assessed.

Many colleges have established or are piloting NVQs, but the full impact of the system is hard to evaluate as the whole range of awards will not be in place until after the end of 1992 and difficulties remain (Pursaill, 1990). However, together with other accreditation developments the system has:

Encouraged colleges to develop or extend flexible methods of programme delivery. Many have now adopted modular or unit-based delivery systems, some by dividing their vocational programmes into modular blocks of six or twelve weeks; others by designing learning and assessment units to meet the specific requirements of awarding and validating bodies or NVQs.

> At Mid Glamorgan College of Agriculture and Horticulture, students taking City and Guilds Gardening have a choice of over 20 subjects and can receive a grouped certificate if they successfully complete 10 modules.

Encouraged a more flexible approach to course completion and assessment. A recent report (Pursaill, 1990) notes that some colleges are adopting flexible methods even in the case of programmes not in unit form to enable students to re-enter and complete an award. By treating programme tasks or assignments as units and recording evidence of their

completion to the required standard, or by rewriting the qualification in the form of units of competence and recording achievement.

Encouraged colleges to initiate or expand learner services. The new modular or unit-based schemes are frequently supported in colleges by a resource-based, student-centred approach involving provision of learning space, equipment and materials, and stress on individual learning plans, guidance and counselling.

> In Southdown College, Portsmouth, a full NVQ is offered by the Hairdressing Department. This includes an induction process, one-to-one interviews to assess prior learning, a skills test and individual learning programmes negotiated between students and staff.

6.2 CREDIT ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFER

Traditionally, accreditation schemes have been separate, discipline-bound and self-contained. This has created barriers between vocational and non-vocational learning and between the further and higher education sectors. The lack of mutual recognition of credits and qualifications has created access and progression difficulties for people wishing to move back into learning without starting again at first base. Although many barriers still exist, one of the current goals of NCVQ and the other examining and validating bodies for education and training is to establish a smoother system for credit accumulation and transfer, thereby creating bridges between different sectors and programmes. The Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) has created a national framework for credit accumulation and transfer at degree and postgraduate level (CATS). This enables HE institutions, and CNAA centrally, to award credit for achievement in participating institutions and accredited employer-based learning. The scheme also allows for awarding credits for prior learning. CNAA is currently in discussion with NCVQ and other agencies to create links between the HE and vocational credit systems. The advantage of the scheme is that students need not complete their accumulation of credits in one continuous period of study at a single institution, or just on one course.

A system of credit accumulation can be facilitated if a college belongs to an Open College Network. These operate a four-level system of credit and accredit a wide range of learning which may take place in formal or informal settings, e.g. workplaces, colleges or the community. To bridge the academic–vocational divide, the National Open College Network in collaboration with UDACE is seeking ways of including NVQs in collaborative arrangements. Several colleges have been working on credit accumulation and transfer schemes.

> A Credit Accumulation Project (CAP), funded by the Training Agency and subsequently by the LEA Development Fund, is being conducted at the College of North East London. Pilot sectors and courses include: Business Administration (BTEC/LCCI NVQ1 and 2); Caring (CCETSW Preliminary

Certificate in Social Care); Carpentry and Joinery (C&G 585); Design (BTEC First Cert/V Dip.); Electrical Installation (C&G 236 part 1), and Floristry (C&G 019). In each of these areas a sector team developed modules or units in competence form as a basis for credit accumulation, using methods developed in the Mainframe Consortium (set up in 1985 by a group of LEAs and subsequently evaluated by the FEU). Each of the modules is accompanied by a set of learning activities, materials and resources, assessment activities and sheets to record progress and achievement. For those students who need them, the project has also developed some 'enabling modules' in core skills such as numeracy, communication and study skills, and 'additional modules' to develop more general work-related skills.

Training has been organised into modular blocks of six or twelve weeks to increase access points and provide a framework within which the CAP modules are delivered and assessed. To facilitate the process, the project has set up cross-college structures including an Admissions and Initial Guidance team and a Learning Resources Team. In addition, more flexible fee structures have been established to allow credit accumulation outside the standard academic year.

The system involves student records of achievement and building personal portfolios so that individuals can give evidence of what they have achieved. Ways of obtaining validation or accreditation for CAP modules and student records of achievement are being explored and staff are liaising with employers and employer panels to extend their currency.

6.3 RECORDS OF ACHIEVEMENT

All the main examining and validating bodies are participating in the system of credit accumulation and have undertaken to recognise units offered by other bodies when similar to their own qualifications. Records of achievement facilitate this process. The National Record of Achievement (NROVA) scheme has been designed to include both NVQ units and qualifications and those offered by other bodies. Some colleges have started to use the National Record of Achievement in their own systems of accreditation and assessment of prior learning.

Open College Networks are providing a framework which includes recognition of achievement from a basic skills level onwards. Such frameworks need to be linked to formative review processes and a single student record.

Wirral Metropolitan College is developing:

- a database of all education and training opportunities derived from the framework
- a single student computerised record accessed by a 'swipe' card
- a record of achievement/'passport' for all learners
- the appointment of an Accreditation, Standards and Assessment Officer
- the recording of outcomes and achievements on a termly basis.

6.4 ADVANTAGES OF THE NEW ACCREDITATION SCHEMES

Unit-based awards and credit accumulation systems provide a comprehensive and progressive framework for adult learning. They make it easier for colleges to design short certificated programmes – a development which helps adults who lack the time to complete year-long training programmes. In addition, NVQs and other modular or unit-based programmes require flexible delivery methods and this also suits adults who may be obliged to enter and re-enter training outside conventional course times. The flexibility inherent in credit accumulation systems also benefits people with diverse and fragmented learning experiences gained at different times and in different locations.

The major advantage of the developing system is that by recognising and accrediting types of learning that did not take place in school, it gives people without the traditional entry requirements access to vocational qualifications. The separation of accreditation from the process of learning facilitates the accreditation of non-college-based learning, experiential learning and work-based learning. It also helps to encourage more flexible forms of learning, including open and distance learning, and encourages adults to take a more active part in deciding and organising their own individual education and training action plan.

NVQs are particularly suitable for adults, as evidence of competence can be drawn from any past experience or activity. An adult can, on initial assessment, be accepted as possessing the skills and experience necessary for levels 3 or 4, facilitating progression directly into higher or professional training. Alternatively, it might be discovered that there are gaps in knowledge and skills which can be filled by working on specific units or module (which may be of only several weeks' duration).

It may be a drawback to many adults, however, that the NCVQ system appears to be focused exclusively on specific job tasks and skills rather than on potentially transferable competences with a wider application: core skills, understanding of the wider industrial context etc. It is to be welcomed, therefore, that NCVQ is currently working on the development of **common competences**, those common to a range of jobs and sectors, and **generic competences**. This is essential in order to ensure maximum transferability between different occupational and academic routes.

6.5 IMPLEMENTING NEW ACCREDITATION SYSTEMS

The extent to which individual colleges implement newer accreditation schemes will depend on local needs and opportunities and their own particular strengths and expertise. However, an examination of the implications of competence-based systems indicates that if colleges wish to change to such provision, they need to adopt a co-ordinated college-wide strategy involving notably:

- a redefinition of the distinctions between full- and part-time provision

- possibilities for credit transfer between modular programmes
- more flexible programme delivery of the kind discussed in previous chapters
- an increased role in workplace assessment and, therefore, closer liaison with employers and industry awarding bodies
- introduction or expansion of learner services such as entry guidance and diagnosis; assessment systems for recording prior learning, progress and achievement; personal tutor schemes
- shifts of staff and resources towards these activities and new resourcing systems
- greater integration of staff and resources across departmental boundaries (FEU, 1989).

The introduction of NVQs would, in particular, require managers to:

- examine the implications of replacing end-of-year examinations with continuous assessment
- allocate staff time for the design, development, production and assessment of materials
- develop the role of course teams and increase specialisation across staff teams
- co-ordinate management of resources within and across teams
- provide flexible learning opportunities and develop resource areas
- introduce common elements to courses across departments
- review staff-student ratios to accommodate changes in style and delivery
- create and maintain communication channels between the college and industry and, within the college, between departments, administration and marketing teams to assist student access and progression between modular programmes.

The experience of **pilot credit accumulation systems** indicates that these work best when colleges establish thorough guidance and induction systems, co-ordinated staff and curriculum development, and computerised records and databases. The NVQ database, launched in 1990 and available on subscription, gives details of all vocational qualifications and includes units, elements of competence and performance criteria for existing NVQs. Colleges can develop their own database which can be used, by:

- **staff:** to map the content of awards; to design programmes that take account of common elements; to record qualification routes and assessment methods for each award
- **learners:** to identify what they have achieved and select accreditation routes
- **employers and other clients:** to identify needs and ways of meeting them.

A college database could be accessed through TAPS and guidance services and has the potential to become a major marketing aid.

There can, of course, be a wide gulf between identifying the changes required and their realisation in practice. However, some colleges have already moved a long way towards remodelling themselves in the ways suggested.

Cumbria College of Art and Design is a 'one department college' with an almost wholly full-time clientele mainly doing BTEC National or Higher National courses. The college has two Production Units (Graphics and Video Production) which provide consultancy services for industry in marketing, training, design management, copywriting and scripting.

In 1987 the senior management team (Principal, Vice-Principal, Director of Studies, Director of Resources) carried out a review of the college in the context of future changes such as ERA and NCVQ.

It was found that almost all the work of management, teaching and other staff was focused on current products, and that this was reflected in college structures. Courses ran as separate units with team leaders in charge of budgets, and staff with cross-college roles were often marginalised. Product development and marketing functions existed only as time and money 'stolen' from teaching and from course budgets. Courses were linear, with little choice of options or learning style.

Delivery structure was seen as the key to change and a framework was devised to transform this. Aims were to provide for personal learning programmes, more flexible delivery and a wider range and choice of provision. It was decided to:

- revise management roles to strengthen marketing and product development
- define teaching staff roles by functional areas based on managing the learning process
- set in motion a staged plan to make all current provision modular, bring in new modular products and market more widely
- develop flexible delivery methods such as open and resource-based learning
- set up a college assessment framework which will support more open access and flexible delivery.

References

FEU (1989) *Implications of competence-based curricula.*

Pursaill, J. (1990) *Flexible access to vocational qualifications*, NIACE REPLAN.

Useful Resources

NCVQ (1990) *Accreditation of prior learning in the context of national vocational qualifications*, R&D Report No. 7.

NCVQ (1990) *Developing NVQs*.

Training Agency Standards Unit *Competence and assessment: the analysis of competence*.

UDACE (1989) *Understanding competence*.

ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

	YES/NO	ACTION
Do adults have full access to the vocational qualifications offered in your college?		
Has your college introduced modular, unit- or competence-based systems enabling adults to accumulate credits for short periods of training?		
Has your college considered extending short qualifying courses for ET trainees to other adult clients?		
What can your college do within existing constraints to facilitate implementation of unit-based and competence-led curricula?		
Have there been any shifts in staff and resources to support new accreditation schemes?		
Is your college able to introduce flexible methods of delivery to accommodate alternative accreditation arrrangements?		
Have there been any integrated curricular and organisational developments across departmental boundaries to assist student access to, and progress within, accreditation routes?		
Have possibilities for credit transfer between programmes been maximised?		
Have any cross-college staff teams been established?		
Has sufficient staff time been allocated for industrial liaison?		
Has sufficient staff time been allocated for the design and development of modules or units and teaching materials to be used in competence-led programmes?		
Is sufficient staff time allocated for assessment in modular or unit-based work?		
What training have staff received to help them implement new systems?		
Have learner services (such as guidance, induction, assessment systems, resource areas) been established or reinforced to support adult students seeking accreditation?		
Have any systems been developed for the identification of learning and achievement?		
Is your college acting as a broker for accreditation and collaborating as far as possible with employers and other agencies?		
Is your college a member of an Open College Network or Federation?		

	YES/NO	ACTION
Are the range of accreditation routes available through the college sufficiently publicised?		
Has your college developed a database detailing all qualification routes, the content of each award, and assessment methods? Is this available to clients and individual students as well as staff? Can the database be accessed through TAPS and local guidance services?		

ISSUES FOR STAFF

	YES/NO	ACTION
Are you aware of the range of accreditation structures available within the college and are you able to advise adults on suitable qualification routes?		
Are you aware of the types of accreditation that may be sought by employers?		
Are you working across departmental and subject boundaries in implementing credit accumulation and transfer systems?		
Are you liaising with local employers to facilitate implementation of NVQs and refine newly-developed competence-based units?		
Are you members of Open College Network recognition groups or moderation panels, with experience in negotiating 'equivalence' between college courses and those of other institutions?		
Have you received any training in implementing new accreditation systems and helping students identify action plans and assess their previous learning and achievement?		

7 ASSESSMENT

Changes in accreditation have been accompanied by changes in assessment methods, and many colleges are currently in a period of transition – still offering long programmes with the traditional end-of-year examinations, while phasing in short courses and vocational awards which require totally different methods of assessment.

This chapter discusses:

7.1 The role of assessment
7.2 Kinds of assessment
7.3 Assessment of prior learning
7.4 Continuous assessment
7.5 Workplace assessment

7.1 THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT

Learners need assessment to support and develop their learning and as a means of formally measuring and recognising that they have met specified standards. Assessment should not be just a tool for selection; it should help learners to identify appropriate education/training routes and clarify the right level at which to start or continue learning. Assessment should be a positive process that occurs throughout learning and at all transition points. It is critical to ensure that failure, where it occurs, is seen as a starting point for learning rather than as a rejection or a reason to drop out.

7.2 KINDS OF ASSESSMENT

Norm-referenced assessment

This is the method traditionally employed in formal education. It ranks individual performance by comparing it with that of others pursuing the same course or level of education. Useful when dealing with a relatively homogeneous group of learners such as children starting school, this method is less suitable for adults as it takes no account of previous learning and experience and the different starting points of individual learners.

New forms of accreditation are encouraging the development of different and more flexible systems of assessment, notably criterion-referenced assessment.

Criterion-referenced assessment

This method specifies the amount of learning that has to be achieved and the threshold or minimum standards required. This helps adults returning to

education or training after an interval to make a better informed choice and avoid problems of mismatch and loss of motivation. Criterion-referenced assessment relies on the collection of a range of evidence rather than precise measurements of some aspects of performance. A number of different criteria or performance standards are applied against which the learner is measured on a pass/fail, or competent/not yet competent basis. This kind of assessment offers no means of grading, comparing or ranking the performance of individuals, but encourages personal learning goals and a sense of achievement.

Personally-referenced assessment systems

These systems are being increasingly used with adult learners as they are a means of measuring the progress of individuals towards predetermined standards in relation to individual starting points. Personally-referenced assessment is integral to personal action plans which have been introduced in some colleges, and in institutions which have developed competence-based and credit accumulation schemes, students themselves are involved in measuring their own progress in order to build a personal portfolio and compile a record of achievement as evidence of competence. However, personally-referenced assessment is still treated with some suspicion by employers, and requires a longer period of familiarity (and marketing) in order to become widely accepted.

7.3 ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING (APL)

Adults returning to education or training bring with them a rich variety of prior learning acquired through their work, their roles as parent, spouse or worker, their relationships with others, and a range of uncertificated courses and studies. It is important that this learning is recognised and assessed and that adults are given the opportunity to build on existing learning rather than waste time and money repeating what they already know. Recognising and assessing existing learning can be an important means of raising the confidence and morale of adults returning to learning after a break, especially those whose previous experience of learning in school has left them with a sense of failure. All the major awarding bodies have accepted assessment of prior learning and achievement as a route to unit credit. City and Guilds, for example, have launched APL in Retail, Wholesale, Hairdressing, Business Administration, Agriculture and Engineering.

In further and higher education, approaches to assessing adults on entry are in varying stages of development, but the following processes are now fairly widespread:

- diagnosing basic or core skills to determine level of entry
- assessing prior experience, skills and achievements to determine individual learning needs
- awarding credit for prior learning or achievement in accordance with the criteria of an awarding body.

APL usually involves portfolio preparation and some form of record of achievement. The City and Guilds Portfolio Training Pack specifies that portfolios should include: 'an account of experiences; backup endorsements and references; related products; past certificates and awards; interview notes with the assessor and current assessment.'

Theoretically, APL can be applied to all qualifications at all levels and some colleges are considering incorporating it into all courses where there are large numbers of adults.

> Crosskeys and Newport Colleges have been participating in the national feasibility study into the Accreditation of Prior Learning. The initial curriculum areas chosen for the project were the City and Guilds 706/1 in Catering, 201 in Engineering, 383 in Motor Engineering; BTEC National in General Engineering and BTEC First National in Business Studies. The pilot involved project staff in guidance and counselling, portfolio-building, evaluation of evidence, and monitoring the APL process. They concluded that APL should become a central option in a whole programme of flexible learning, but that this would involve widespread institutional and staff development. In response, the two colleges are considering mounting a series of cross-disciplinary APL workshops, tutored by staff with expertise in competence-based accreditation and portfolio development.
>
> Staff engaged in the project also found that much of the APL process could be managed by the learner with support from a computer-based system. Consequently, a new system is being developed, with funding from TEED, which will provide the learner with a structure to work within and help with the processes of claiming competence and building a portfolio .
>
> Another consortium, including a number of FE colleges, piloting APL in Peterborough and north Lincolnshire have found that clients can take up to three months gathering evidence and putting together a portfolio. Staff stress that the APL process needs to be explained very carefully to all interested parties: to clients, who tend to think APL is 'some kind of course'; to employers who are initially dubious; and to some members of college staff who consider it a 'soft option' and need to be persuaded of the benefits.

While its advantages to adults are indisputable, APL may not initially seem a realistic option for all colleges. It is not a cheap and simple access arrangement, since it is expensive in staff time and needs to be carried out by experienced staff. Costs to the student vary. The consortium in Peterborough and north Lincolnshire estimate charges as follows:

- fee for awarding body: £20–£40
- client fees: £35 for building portfolio and £65 for assessment (although the initial interview is free and there is no charge to people claiming benefits).

Colleges which have introduced APL have found that although the initial costs are high, they tend to even out over time and are offset by higher

student satisfaction and retention rates. Costs can also be offset by marketing the staff expertise gained in operating APL.

> Some higher education institutions involved in Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CATS) are franchising APL elements to Stroud College which has a unit specialising in the process. Staff who have developed expertise through the pilot APL scheme at Newport and Crosskeys Colleges have initiated a staff development service for other institutions wishing to launch APL.

7.4 CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

Provision of courses and programmes with flexible entry and exit points creates a demand for assessment throughout the college year, and the need to provide continuous assessment has been reinforced by the increasing tendency by awarding bodies to certificate completed units or modules and the spread of competence-based awards. This places college staff under a great deal of pressure. According to one principal, a problem staff have encountered with competence-based qualifications is having to cope both with teaching and assessment within a short period of time; a factor which is not fully recognised in resourcing:

> *'Colleges are finding NVQ work difficult with teaching and a high assessment load. There's a lot of staff time involved which isn't taken account of in costs. The nitty-gritty issue is whether assessment should be charged separately.'*

New assessment methods and systems are therefore generating new resourcing and staff needs which require careful planning. For example, there is an emerging need for staff support and training to help them cope with the change from traditional patterns of teaching and assessment and, again, this offers colleges which have effectively made that transition the opportunity to share their expertise.

In response to changing circumstances and demand, some colleges have established assessment centres linked with guidance and other learner services, which provide assessment on demand both for college students and for clients outside the college.

> Wirral Metropolitan College has created a Learning and Assessment Centre which brings together a study centre, independent learning resources, maths, communications and IT workshops with learner services and support, admissions, guidance, assessment and exit services. Local employers are interested in new services available through the centre and the college is offering a portfolio service to them. Learning and assessment centres of this kind convey an ethos which is strikingly different from traditional workshops and styles of delivery.

7.5 WORKPLACE ASSESSMENT

An increase in the variety of assessment methods, and greater dependence on the collection of evidence rather than testing, means that assessment can take place in a wider variety of settings. Traditional classroom-based written examinations are only appropriate for the assessment of some aspects of knowledge. Technical skills as well as oral and group-work skills require assessment in the workshop and tutorial room. Many of the new vocational qualifications require observation of performance in the workplace and in simulated exercises and projects. Further education has a contribution to make to workplace assessment.

> For example, some colleges have been approved as centres able to carry out complete NVQ assessments in catering, using college training restaurants and other facilities. One college has been approved as workplace assessment centre for retail as it runs a retail business on a scale that enables all required competences to be assessed in practice. Other colleges have developed a role in workplace assessment through work simulation, student placement arrangements, helping small firms in conducting their assessments, and training assessors.

If colleges are to become more involved in workplace assessment, staff will need training to help them ensure that assessment is regular and consistent and to help them cope with the complexities involved in the move from externally assessed courses to more internal assessment and moderation. Colleges themselves may need information on how to set up effective workplace simulations and how to devise workable and cost-effective workplace assessment. The Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative, for example, has provided materials for recognising and assessing communication and numeracy skills and accrediting them at three to four different levels in a variety of occupational areas (ALBSU, 1990).

Reference

Basic Skills Initiative in the Workplace (1990) *Better basic skills, better work: cases in point*, ALBSU.

Useful Resources

Evans, N. (1988) *The assessment of prior experiential learning*, CNAA.

FEU (1989) *Implications of competence-based curricula.*

FEU (1990) *Training for the future.*

Pursaill, J. (1990) *Flexible access to vocational qualifications*, NIACE REPLAN.

Wirral Metropolitan College *Assessment in action*, a pack (video and booklet) for managers and staff involved in implementing NVQs.

ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

YES/NO	ACTION

Have the assessment methods currently operating in your college been examined for their appropriateness to adult students?

Is assessment viewed not as a means of testing, but as a way of maximising learning potential by enabling adults to identify their own starting points, to measure and record their progress, and to choose appropriate points of exit or progression?

Has your college established any alternative methods of assessment for adults, such as assessment of prior learning, records of achievement, recording of competence? Has the establishment of an open assessment centre been considered?

Has your college become involved in workplace assessment? Is there an opportunity to market its services in this area?

Have steps been taken to ensure that all methods of assessment are fully understood by both staff and students?

Have staff received any training in continuous assessment, assessment of prior achievement or work-based assessment (e.g. City and Guilds or RSA), or have they had to learn on the job?

Are alternative forms of assessment limited to certain departments or programmes or have they spread across all areas of college work?

If new assessment methods have been enabled by outside funding, have steps been taken to ensure that the expertise acquired and lessons learned benefit the whole college and its clients?

Can the expertise gained by staff in operating new assessment systems be marketed outside the college?

Has your college installed any computer-based systems to assist students in evaluating and assessing their own prior learning and experience?

ISSUES FOR STAFF

	YES/NO	ACTION
Are you alert to the range of existing experience and learning acquired by adults?		
Are you aware of any possibilities that exist in the college to give adult learners credit for existing learning and advanced standing on some courses?		
Are students encouraged to evaluate their own progress and achievements?		
Have you sought any training in forms of assessment such as APL, continuous assessment, assessment of competence?		
Are there ways of passing on experience and expertise acquired in these areas to other members of the college or staff in other organisations?		

8 TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

The rapid succession of new curriculum and accreditation initiatives and changing modes of delivery and assessment are having an inevitable impact on the teaching and learning approaches employed in colleges.

8.1 Why different approaches are needed
8.2 The move towards individualised learning
8.3 Open and flexible learning
8.4 Teaching/learning approaches in course provision
8.5 Group work
8.6 Changing staff roles

8.1 WHY DIFFERENT APPROACHES ARE NEEDED

- Adult groups have a far wider range of prior learning and experience than younger students.
- Different groups may have different learning requirements as well as specific fears or problems which need sensitive handling.
- Changing modes of delivery and assessment call for teaching/learning strategies that are substantially different from the traditional approaches.

8.2 THE MOVE TOWARDS INDIVIDUALISED LEARNING

The teaching/learning approaches currently employed in colleges cover a spectrum from traditional teacher-directed instruction of groups within defined blocks of time, to totally open provision allowing learners the freedom to design their own learning programme and pursue it at their own convenience. Increasingly, these different approaches are combined and mixed-mode learning is becoming common within vocational courses. The NVQ system enables people to learn at a rate and in a manner which suits individual abilities and preferences, and to acquire credit for competences acquired through open learning. Awarding bodies such as BTEC also now approve some units of unit-based courses which are delivered through open learning.

Increasing flexibility in college practices and procedures means that adults can enter some programmes at different times and stages. As individuals vary widely in ability, prior learning and experience, each will need a personal learning plan based on recognition of existing skills and experience. The 'action plan' method used with ET trainees involves identifying individual client needs and objectives and negotiating a programme of learning and assessment related to these. A number of colleges follow a similar procedure with all adult students on college-based courses. An initial

assessment or diagnosis enables individual learning agendas ('learning contracts' or 'action plans') to be drawn up, based on clear agreement between students and staff on curriculum content and outcomes. Negotiating with the adult learner as much as possible of the content and process of their learning ensures that previous experience and present intentions can be integrated in a coherently planned educational process.

An individualised learning approach can be used in most areas of provision for adults. A guide to workplace basic education, for example, recommends allowing adults to work at their own level, and follow an independent work scheme within the framework of each session's plan (ALBSU, 1990).

The move towards individual learning plans has involved greater stress on open learning. The number of students studying further education courses through open learning in England increased rapidly throughout the 1980s. By 1990 there were about 19,000, the majority of them adults. Not surprisingly, therefore, provision of this facility has been described as one of the most successful aspects of further education work with adults (Marks & Elsdon, 1991).

8.3 OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING

Open and flexible learning significantly improves access to training and education for adults who cannot attend conventional courses. It can be effectively used across the whole range of provision for adults, including updating of skills and basic education, and is particularly suitable for those following unit-based or modular courses.

Learner choice is central to open learning strategies. If successfully implemented, these fulfil several functions: they enable learners to design a curriculum to meet perceived learning needs; to learn at the time, place and pace of their choice, and to have their learning recognised and validated in the most appropriate way.

Most colleges provide some facilities for open and flexible learning. An HMI inspection between 1988-1989 found that nearly all of 53 colleges visited had established some form of open learning, and that an extensive range of subjects could be studied this way by both full- and part-time students. The development of such facilities is increasing.

> Gloucester College of Arts and Technology, for example, has a policy aim that by 1992 25 per cent of the curriculum will be delivered through open and flexible learning. The forms open learning takes in colleges vary. Some have established open access workshops for specific curriculum areas such as maths, communication skills or computing; others have well-resourced, general open learning units where students can work through a variety of modular or unit-based programmes. A college in Birmingham has developed drop-in learning development centres to encourage a student-centred approach to

learning across the curriculum. These are equipped with open learning resources, including IT, and members of staff are on hand to support students.

Colleges are also playing a part in open learning in the workplace. In Wales, a chemical company is using open learning packages to update the skills of its process plant staff operating on a shift basis. On-site tuition is provided by the local further education college.

The move towards open and flexible learning involves a significant change in the traditional roles of institution and teaching staff and the way they are perceived. Colleges may be regarded more as resource bases than teaching institutions and staff will be required to perform not so much a teaching or instructing role as a support, advising and facilitating role to assist people through the curriculum. This transition has not yet fully taken place. The HMI report on Open Learning (1990) observed that in some institutions, counselling and tutorial support was insufficient both at induction and throughout courses, and that student support needs were sometimes underestimated. The result was a high drop-out rate. According to this report, the best practice was to be found in institutions in which college management was committed to open learning and time had been allocated for curriculum and staff development specifically in relation to it.

8.4 TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES IN COURSE PROVISION

A number of ways to stimulate and enhance adult learning have been identified. While it is clear that different things can be taught and learned in different ways, the evidence from adult education is that interactive, participative and experiential learning – learning by doing – is more effective than formal presentations in work with mature students. The evidence also indicates that adult motivation is enhanced if learners can see how programmes of study are related to what is already established in their life. Adult learners are less tolerant than younger students of a curriculum which appears remote from life, and teaching approaches that appear to ignore or patronise their experience.

A report on implementing PICKUP (HMI, 1989) confirms that the following features characterise good practice in teaching approaches with adults:

- utilisation of the experience of group members: 'The most successful sessions are those in which good use is made of the students' own experiences to illustrate and establish particular points. This combined with sensitive and careful questioning engenders a high degree of learning'
- giving students opportunities to influence the direction and content of courses through negotiation and actively involved through participation in discussions, practical work and case study
- an experiential or applications-led approach rather than one which is too theoretical and in which students are overloaded with notes

- careful balance and integration between theoretical and practical activities, with assistance provided during practical sessions and counselling when appropriate.

Other reports on work with adults also stress their desire for practical activities rather than theory. However, most also make the point that practical components need to be underpinned by well-constructed and designed worksheets and background notes. For example, use of assignments related to a real industrial environment can make learning more realistic and more relevant to students, while the use of audio-visual aids, particularly video recordings, can stimulate discussion and set the scene.

In PICKUP courses, a lecture plus discussion approach is often employed, and experimental work, using a range of teaching aids to lend variety, increase involvement and enhance learning. In the longer PICKUP courses, projects and assignments have been used to broaden and extend students' experience, to meet specific application needs and to introduce an element of individualised learning.

8.5 GROUP WORK

The report on PICKUP courses comments that use of well-structured small group activities to discuss or undertake simulation activities, ensured active involvement and that the process of reporting back provided a useful training in social competence. In other areas of college provision it has been found effective to strike a balance between whole-group teaching and individual work, to allow for variations in individual ability levels, learning needs and pace. In some college programmes adult learning includes a combination of flexible learning packages and regular whole group sessions.

Whole-group work can increase student motivation by encouraging mutual support, sharing of experience and formation of friendships. Group sessions work best if they combine an initial facilitator input with group activities such as: discussion, seminars and tutorials, discussion, games, pair-work, problem-solving exercises, simulation and role-play, research (interviewing, documentary search, surveys), brainstorming.

In colleges that still have a largely traditional student profile, questions can arise in relation to group work, such as: can students of all ages be integrated into a group? What balance is desirable? The vice-principal of one college claims that the presence of a few adults in a programme dominated by younger students tends to have a positive effect on the group as a whole. Conversely, the principal of a college which is gradually increasing its adult student intake maintains that having one or two adults in a group of 16-year-olds does not always work and the classroom situation needs careful handling: 'It is important to get the balance right between large and small group-work, in a way that gives all members an opportunity to contribute and to shine. But all sorts of difficulties are emerging with our staff with the mix of ages'.

8.6 CHANGING STAFF ROLES

As this suggests, the move towards an adult clientele can make heavy demands on staff. For example, teaching people who have not been in a formal learning situation for some years may present a challenge to those mainly accustomed to teaching school leavers, especially as adult expectations of and attitudes towards education are very varied. Some will expect a didactic teaching style while others will reject it and expectations of tutors may change over time. In addition, greater flexibility in college procedures, enabling individuals to join and leave programmes at different times, combined with the wide range of ability in adult groups, can create a difficult and complex situation for teachers to manage.

Changes in assessment, delivery and modes of learning are resulting in a situation whereby staff are increasingly expected to work in a variety of capacities, providing, as well as instruction, guidance and services such as individual diagnosis and assessment. Working with adults also entails a shift in traditional staff-student relations. It is important to recognise and appreciate the value of adults' previous experience, their maturity, and the contribution they can make. This means respecting students as equals. The HMI report on PICKUP courses in Wales (1989) identifies one of the key elements in best practice as a relationship between tutors and students characterised by: 'shared enthusiasms, mutual respect and a relaxed atmosphere which is conducive to learning.' It observes that in cases where room arrangements and teaching methods were formal, there was little interaction between tutor and students and between participants themselves.

All the evidence, therefore, suggests that successful adult learning is assisted by a shift away from formal teaching, in which the teacher sets the agenda, towards a situation of greater partnership between teacher and student, in which the teacher takes on the roles of leader, guide, facilitator and information-giver, encouraging learner autonomy by:

- consultation and negotiation over teaching/learning methods
- formulation of individual work plans
- informal sessions which allow incidental learning and peer group support to take place
- a system to record achievements and competences
- encouragement of students to evaluate and improve on their own performance
- review and feedback sessions in which clients are involved in monitoring and modifying learning programmes.

An important issue is whether, given the range of new developments in further education and the new roles they are having to fulfil, staff are receiving enough support and training. Some reports on college work with adults make the point that they are having to adapt and learn on the job – and that though they are mostly committed and enthusiastic about the new developments, few have been trained specifically to deal with adult students and new modes of learning and assessment.

There are, therefore, important resource and staff development dimensions to changing staff roles, and these are discussed in subsequent chapters.

References

ALBSU (1990) *Workplace basic skills provision.*

HMI (1989) *A survey of PICKUP provision in the further and higher education colleges in Wales, 1987-1988.*

HMi (1990) *Open learning in further education.*

Marks, H.E.S. & Elsdon, K.T. (1991) *Adults in the colleges of further education,* University of Nottingham.

Useful Resources

FEU (1984) *Curriculum development in the education of adults: a manual for practitioners.*

FEU & MSC Open Learning Branch (1987) *Implementing open learning in local authority institutions.*

ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

	YES/NO	ACTION
Has your college initiated or developed any teaching/learning strategies specifically in relation to adult learners? Is it recognised that adult learners may require specific approaches?		
Has your college developed a student-centred approach to learning which enables adults to formulate individual learning plans?		
Have the resourcing implications of such a process – e.g. the need for staff time on a one-to-one basis, the need for support staff – been fully explored?		
Are colleges where adult students can draw up learning contracts fully aware that this is a two-way process which also entails a commitment from the institution?		
Has open and flexible learning been integrated into the institution's teaching and learning approaches?		
Have resources been allocated to support open and flexible learning and has a policy been formulated on open learning provision?		
Are sufficient good quality learning materials available for students working on their own?		
Do students working on their own receive sufficient staff support and guidance?		
Have staff development programmes been provided to help staff develop new flexible learning approaches with adults?		

ISSUES FOR STAFF

	YES/NO	ACTION
Have you developed teaching methods and styles which recognise learning as a partnership?		
Adults have a diversity of backgrounds and return to education and training with a wide range of experience, prior learning and abilities. Have you recognised this by adopting flexible, individualised teaching and learning approaches?		
Have teaching materials been adapted to adult students?		
Are the experience and maturity of adults respected and fully used in training/education programmes?		
Are students able to negotiate the pace and content of their learning programmes?		
Do you appreciate that individual learning plans drawn up with students are a two-way process and entail a commitment by you (e.g. a five-day turn around for marking an assignment)?		
Do you take into account in your teaching the worries and fears of some groups returning to learning – particularly those who have experienced earlier educational failure?		
Flexible methods of delivery and assessment require a shift in emphasis from teaching to learning. Are you prepared for this shift?		
Are efforts made to introduce, wherever possible, relevant concrete examples and practical work rather than just relying on theory and paper work?		
Have methods been devised to assist adults to assess their own progress?		
Are there opportunities for students to provide feedback on all courses?		

SECTION III

policy issues

SUPPORTING THE ADULT LEARNER

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

COLLABORATION

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

FINANCE AND RESOURCES

9 SUPPORTING THE ADULT LEARNER

Many of the developments discussed in previous chapters depend, for their effectiveness, on the provision of a range of support services for adult learners.

This chapter considers:

9.1 Why adult students need support
9.2 Kinds of support
9.3 How colleges can respond to adult support service
9.4 Providing a comprehensive support service
9.5 A framework for adult learner support

9.1 WHY ADULT STUDENTS NEED SUPPORT

Adults returning to education/training generally need a variety of support services, particularly if there has been a long interval since formal schooling. Some who had negative school experiences may be alienated from, or intimidated by, formal education and may need 'sheltered' approaches, while particular groups such as ethnic minorities, women, adults with special needs, and adults lacking basic skills, will have specific support needs. The importance of supplying such support is stressed in most reports on adults in further and higher education. For example, it is a prominent theme of a recent HMI report on Access courses provided in colleges (1990).

9.2 KINDS OF SUPPORT

The support required by adult students falls into two basic categories, personal support and learning support.

Personal support

Practical measures and procedures that help learners gain access to, embark upon and sustain an education or training programme, e.g. accessible information, advice and guidance, including careers guidance, at all stages; childcare; financial information; personal counselling; and, in some contexts, transport.

Learning or curriculum support

Measures to help students learn effectively and gain maximum benefit from their chosen programme(s) of education or training: induction, a wide choice of provision and learning modes; maximum flexibility of delivery; access to information technology as a resource or as a skill; maths and communication support; language support for speakers of other languages; study skills

support; assessment facilities; access to a personal tutor for review and feedback; a summative record to facilitate credit accumulation and transfer.

This distinction between kinds of support is reflected in tutor functions which include both the academic tutor role and the pastoral (personal) tutor role – roles which overlap and are often fulfilled by one person. Similarly, some college procedures, such as access services, guidance and induction, may combine elements of both personal and curriculum support.

9.3 HOW COLLEGES CAN RESPOND TO ADULT SUPPORT NEEDS

Support for adult learners entails a shift from a curriculum or course-driven approach (in which the learner is required to fit the curriculum) to a learner-led model where the curriculum serves the learner. This requires support services at three stages.

Pre-entry

At the simplest level, support for the adult student will be ensuring that the college, its ethos, practices and procedures, are perceived as accessible and non-threatening, as stressed in Chapters 2 and 3. The role of language in this, in particular the terminology used in publicity and course information, should not be underestimated. It is not just titles of course and college services that can intimidate and contribute to misconceptions about further education, but also the way the range of services and outcomes are described.

> For example, one college principal has found that using the word 'test' has a strongly inhibiting effect on potential adult students: 'Never use the word "test" with adults. It's a killer. Even the word "assessment" can be off-putting.'

A useful form of pre-entry support would therefore be publicity or a handbook, aimed specifically at adult learners and at particular groups, compiled with careful attention to style, tone and terminology.

Other forms of essential pre-entry support include:

- accessible information and guidance, including careers advice, financial advice, and educational guidance to ensure that learner choices are coherent and will have the desired outcomes (see Chapter 4)
- progression routes from education provided in the community which maximise access possibilities by linking outreach opportunities with mainstream provision (see Chapter 3).

At entry

Access systems, guidance and personal tutor schemes which include initial diagnosis, assessment of prior learning to identify achievements and potential transferability of skills; building a personal portfolio/profile; negotiation of learning programmes (see Chapters 4, 8 and 9).

Institutions which have evaluated the progress of adult students have found that the drop-out rate can be high, particularly when they have been

admitted on an 'infill' basis. This has led some colleges to introduce an induction period for mature students which allows them to get to know the premises; receive guidance; discuss requirements and problems; meet staff; sample courses and get acquainted with other students. Induction periods vary from college to college.

> Brixton College, for example, operates a one to three day induction period before enrolment. Induction before enrolment can pay dividends in terms of student satisfaction and retention rates. An induction process which includes taster courses enables students to discover whether the programmes that initially attracted them are the most suitable and to identify more appropriate alternatives.

An induction programme can also identify literacy, numeracy, communication and study skill needs, and offer initial support in these areas. In some colleges this kind of provision is made in an Access Unit.

During learning programmes

During learning, adults have a variety of personal as well as learning support needs. For adults on college-based programmes personal support might include:

- personal counselling and a personal tutor scheme
- separate social and study facilities. These are important for several reasons: the ambience of some colleges does not suit adults. According to the HMI report on Access courses in colleges (1990): 'Often in FE, communal areas had the wrong feel ... Access students were physically and socially apart from the mainstream of college life. One Access student said: "We feel like intruders in an adolescent world".' In addition, some adult students – particularly women – have no study space at home or may find it difficult to study at home because of family demands
- peer group learning (e.g. women only). This can be very important to some groups, particularly in the initial stages of a course, as it allows for sharing of problems and mutual support
- childcare facilities. The importance of this support for women has been frequently stressed (see also Chapter 10).

Learning or curriculum support would include:

- guidance throughout learning (see Chapter 4)
- help with study skills
- basic skills assistance
- language support including ESOL for those needing help with English skills
- supporting integration for people with disabilities
- drop-in open or flexible learning workshops where students can work at their own pace but with staff on call to guide or facilitate
- teaching support (attention to teaching methods and styles and the way information is given on the course. For example, allowances may need to

be made for foreign students unfamiliar with an English accent and a specialised vocabulary.)
- attention to the language of teaching materials. They should be checked for appropriateness to adults, clarity, relevance, etc.
- assessment services
- careers advice.

Of these, three need to be highlighted.

Basic skills. The Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit estimates that some 13% of the population have some difficulty with reading, writing, spelling or with basic mathematics. In colleges, effective response to these needs will involve specific and separate core literacy and numeracy provision (see 5.7), but it also involves strategies to embed literacy and numeracy support in the full range of college courses. This will be done in a number of ways – ranging from support offered by the course tutor, access to literacy, numeracy and study skills workshops, through to co-tutored elements of skills courses. There are a number of staff development strategies that can help to sensitise staff with vocational skills expertise to the needs of basis skills students including help with materials presentation and in simplifying the language used on handouts, to diagnose skills that help staff to recognise students' basic skills needs. Literacy and numeracy support needs will not be limited to courses on college premises. Workbase, the national voluntary organisation, has worked with a number of colleges to provide basic skills support in work-based premises.

Language support. ALBSU calculates that half-a-million adults in Britain have some degree of difficulty with English and, again, many colleges will need to respond to their needs by making distinct ESOL provision, and providing ESOL support to students pursuing other studies. Many refugees or recent migrants have poor skills in English, but high levels of skill in vocational training. A large number have difficulty with getting qualifications gained overseas recognised in Britain. Such students are highly motivated to consolidate skills qualifications recognised in Britain, and seek to improve ESOL skills within the framework of vocational study. A number of colleges ensure that ESOL provision can be integrated with other courses, and recent initiatives at Newham Community College and in Sheffield combine language support with competence based assessment of prior educational experiences (see also Chapter 10).

Supporting people with disabilities. Adults with learning difficulties can integrate into a wide variety of other courses, given an adequately resourced learning support unit, like that operated at Newcastle College of Arts and Technology. Other disabilities where the medium of communication has an impact on curriculum delivery (for deaf, hard of hearing or visually impaired adults) require in-course learning support of a different sort, e.g. availability of tapes of written materials. Successful integration involves a combination of support from specialist staff and from the course staff responsible for the primary programme of study (see Sutcliffe, 1990; see also Chapter 10).

At exit

- Exit/careers guidance
- A credit accumulation and transfer service.

Many of these forms of support will only be available on college premises. For adults engaged in training provided by colleges in the workplace, support can be provided in the form of ongoing tutorial support and guidance; assistance with basic education, language or study skills; provision of open or distance learning materials and audio-visual resources; assessment services.

9.4 PROVIDING A COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICE

Most colleges supply some of these forms of support for adult students and some have established a comprehensive range of support mechanisms.

One example, South Bristol College, provides a comprehensive and inter-connected network of programmes and services for adults, conceived as a 'web' enabling people to move between curriculum areas with maximum support. Adult students enter the college through a first-tier guidance service and are then assisted throughout learning by the wide-ranging Adult Students Foundation Service (ASFS). This has two roles: preparing adults for the return to study, and supplying extra learning support for students following college programmes. ASFS supports adult students in a number of areas: study skills; identifying prior achievement for accreditation ('Make your Experience Count'); writing, spelling, maths, and spoken communication; English language and ESOL; support for adults with special needs. Underpinning all these services there is a second-tier, full-time guidance and counselling service funded from base budget, which is open to all adult students at any point. In addition to its range of vocational and non-vocational provision, the college offers a supportive curriculum for adults. This includes a variety of courses to help adults identify future directions, return to work or move to higher education. For example, there is a college-funded 'Options' programme which helps prepare individuals and groups for identified next steps. The programme also includes 'Options for Grants', a workshop session to help mature students find sources of financial support, followed up by expert help with filling in forms.

9.5 A FRAMEWORK FOR ADULT LEARNER SUPPORT

To provide an effective, college-wide range of interconnected support services for adults requires forethought and planning.

Restructuring or reorganisation has sometimes provided the stimulus, as in the case of Pembrokeshire College which, with REPLAN assistance, has used the opportunity offered by a move to new premises to initiate a project to develop their adult support services. This has entailed a review of existing student support services to identify good practices for incorporating into future provision, and the compilation of a self-help guidance pack to be used in the delivery of adult support services. The guide includes information on financing

study, career changes, open learning, education and training progression, gaining qualifications, local higher education opportunities, redundancy and retraining.

For other colleges considering extending their support services for adults, key elements in a corporate approach would be:

- a mission statement committing the institution to supporting and maximising the achievement of individual learners whatever their previous education or training experience
- an equal opportunities policy declaring support for all groups of students especially those in disadvantaged categories
- a policy on education in the community and progression routes to college mainstream
- a language policy to ensure that the additional language support needed by some adult students is provided by the college regardless of the particular course of study
- a policy on providing: guidance and counselling at all stages, resource-based open and flexible learning, assessment services and a credit transfer service.

The implementation of such policies have, of course, significant implications for resource allocation, staff appointments and deployment. Learner and learning support mechanisms should not be marginal activities and they cannot be provided cheaply. However, they are ultimately cost-effective since they help to ensure effective learning, to maximise student achievement and to reduce drop-out. In addition, they can establish or contribute to a college's reputation for client-centredness which can be an important factor in attracting new students and new contracts from employers. A shift of resources to student support systems can therefore be a sound investment.

References

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Useful Resources

FEU (1989) *Supporting the unemployed in further education.*

McGivney, V. (1990) *Education's for other people: access to education for non-participant adults*, NIACE.

Marks, H.E.S. & Elsdon, K.T. (1991) *Adults in the colleges of further education*, University of Nottingham.

ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

	YES/NO	ACTION
Does your college have a policy on adult student support which recognises the need to provide practical support in the form of guidance, counselling, basic skills, language skills and study skills support, at all stages in the learning process?		
Have resources been devoted to learner services?		
Are adult students served by your college helped to derive maximum benefit from their education/training?		
Has your college promoted a corporate approach to learner support beyond the personal tutor/student services model?		
Has your college used the opportunities of the delegation of financial power to review staffing needs to support learners?		
Has the value of non-teaching and support staff been recognised and have specific support staff appointments been made?		
Is learner support linked with curriculum change to ensure that the curriculum serves the learner?		
Are guidance and induction periods available before enrolment to help adults make the right learning choices?		
Does your college provide support at all stages in learning, including the pre-access and exit stages?		

ISSUES FOR STAFF

	YES/NO	ACTION
Are you satisfied that adult learners within the college are achieving their full potential?		
Do you recognise the link between the quality of support offered to adult learners and successful learning outcomes?		
Are you aware of the range and extent of adult learners' personal and learning support needs?		
Are the specific support needs of some groups of learners, e.g. people with special needs, women with family dependents, ethnic minorities, recognised?		
Are you familiar with the scope of all the personal and support services offered within your college and are you able to advise students on their use?		
Is there full collaboration between staff across your college to facilitate referrals to appropriate learning support services on the college (study skills, language support, literacy, numeracy)?		
Are there channels for staff to perform an advocacy role on behalf of adult students who require forms of support not available within the college?		
Are tutors achieving an appropriate balance between their teaching and support roles?		
Have you requested and received any specific training in areas such as guidance and counselling, induction, initial diagnosis, APL?		

10 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Some adults need particular support if they are to take full advantage of education and training. These are groups which tend to be under-represented in further education – older adults, members of ethnic minority groups, some groups of women and people with special needs. Further education does not deliberately exclude these groups, but each experiences a range of barriers that inhibit their access to education.

The first part of this chapter considers equal opportunities: a policy and its implementation. Subsequent sections examine ways of increasing and supporting the participation of three groups - people with special needs; black ethnic minority groups and women.

10.1 An equal opportunities policy
10.2 Strategies for implementation
10.3 Equity monitoring
10.4 Staff posts
10.5 Adults with special needs
10.6 Black ethnic minority groups
10.7 Women

10.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Further education and vocational preparation should be available to all who want it, regardless of age, gender, race or physical/mental ability. To achieve equity requires identification of the needs and requirements of any groups excluded from the full range of education and training provision; the removal of physical, attitudinal and institutional barriers; the development of positive recruitment strategies, and measures to integrate under-represented groups into mainstream provision and make them feel valued within the college. It also requires attention not just to access but to the outcomes of participation.

Many colleges have an equal opportunities policy and are making some efforts to attract under-represented groups, and in some LEAs, the principle of equity is used as one of the criteria on which college performance is assessed.

10.2 STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Equal opportunities should be central to a college development plan. However, a policy on its own cannot ensure commitment to equal opportunities in an institution. It needs to be accompanied by a plan of action. In some colleges, equal opportunities strategies have involved:

- equity monitoring throughout college provision
- identification of under-represented groups as a market sector and local needs analysis
- review of college provision, procedures and practices in relation to access for under-represented groups
- special staff appointments such as:
  - community liaison officer(s)
  - senior post(s) with designated responsibility to co-ordinate equal opportunities across the college
  - tutors and counsellors with responsibility for pastoral care for specific groups
- establishment of equal opportunities units or committees which cross departmental and organisational boundaries
- in-service training for staff *and* governors to develop understanding of the education and training needs of different groups
- curriculum development to reflect the experience and perspectives of different groups
- establishment of a system to monitor take-up, experience and progress of students, using performance indicators which include qualitative as well as quantitative measures
- liaison with other sectors, education providers, and voluntary organisations: equal opportunities issues cut across all sectors and levels of provision.

To be effective, action on equal opportunities needs to be institution-wide. Initiatives should be meshed in with other developments in a college, such as marketing, evaluation, curriculum and staff development, institutional monitoring and evaluation, collection of data. Integration with other initiatives gives equal opportunities a higher profile, involves more staff and makes a greater impact on the institution. In any strategy for implementing equal opportunities, the key issues are flexibility and support.

10.3 EQUITY MONITORING

Equity monitoring is an important element in an equal opportunities strategy. For example, the Royal College of Dean has recently conducted a review of its student composition and is now to revise its policies in order to get a better gender balance. However, equity monitoring needs to have regard for the total community being served, not just those enrolled on college courses. It also needs to be applied in relation to staff at a college, to examine what percentage of people from under-represented groups are in college posts and at what levels of responsibility.

10.4 STAFF POSTS

Postholders can be the catalysts who create a momentum for equal opportunities in a college. A special appointee can co-ordinate, support,

advise, and maintain documentary resources on equal opportunities issues. However, experience shows that in educational institutions there is a danger of diverting anything to do with equal opportunities to a single member of staff, enabling other staff to disclaim responsibility. This leaves the person concerned vulnerable, isolated and inadequately supported. Equal opportunities-related issues can be controversial, and some college staff members feel threatened by attempts to address them. This sometimes leads to hostility towards the co-ordinator of equal opportunities in a college:

> *'Getting appointed as an equal opportunities team leader with responsibility for gender, race and disability, evoked an amazingly hostile response from both men and women' (EOC/FEU, 1990).*

It is better, therefore, to involve, consult and inform as wide a range of staff as possible in equal opportunities strategies. In one college, involving staff in the drafting of an equal opportunities policy has been found a useful way of exploring attitudes and gaining commitment.

10.5 ADULTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Special needs is a blanket term which groups together people with:

- physical disabilities
- mental handicap
- learning difficulties
- sensory impairment
- behavioural or emotional problems.

Common barriers to access

Depending on their disability, adults with special needs experience a range of physical, material and emotional (dispositional) barriers to participating in further education. These include:

- limited physical mobility
- lack of transport
- lack of money (many have had limited employment experience and are dependent on social security allowances)
- lack of previous education and employment experience (especially those who have spent considerable time in institutions)
- isolation (long periods housebound, in residential institutions or hospitals)
- dependence and lack of autonomy
- diffidence about approaching institutions where the majority of students are able-bodied (experienced particularly by older adults who have spent long periods housebound or in sheltered environments)
- negative attitudes towards people with special needs (e.g. stereotyping and lack of understanding of individual needs; underestimation of individual abilities, skills and potential).

Access to further education

Lack of training facilities and rigid and narrowly-defined conceptions of employability mean that people with special needs constitute a wasted resource. Although recent advances in technology are making it increasingly possible for some groups to participate fully and on equal terms with others in learning and in work, many adults with special needs have had very limited access to post-school education and training. While provision has grown substantially in colleges since the 1970s, an HMI report in 1989 revealed that the sector's response is still limited and patchy. Some colleges have made admirable efforts to provide for young people with special needs. Integrating older individuals will need even greater efforts. Adults who have had little access to special education and little or no employment experience, require extra and longer-term support.

Individual student requirements vary enormously but there are some general steps colleges can take to facilitate access to learning:

For all groups

- consultation and liaison with individuals, their families and specialist agencies to identify individual needs and appropriate responses and to facilitate programming, work placements and transition between agencies
- positive and sensitively-worded marketing and publicity, emphasising that adults with disabilities are welcome and describing available facilities
- provision of outreach programmes for people in residential homes or day centres and organisation of distance or home-based learning for those who cannot get to college
- assistance with transport for those without the means to get to college.

For physically disabled or sensory-impaired students

- provision of parking space at college sites
- adaptations to buildings to improve access to and within college buildings (for example, provision of ramps and lifts)
- location of courses on the ground floor
- installation of specially-designed toilets and washing facilities
- adaptation of workshops and equipment
- special equipment, teaching aids, etc. to assist mobility and learning.

Provision

According to one college principal, a prime role of provision for people with special needs should be to assist them to become economically independent. Thus the most useful programmes are those which:

- increase mobility and independence
- encourage ways of overcoming disability/handicap
- improve basic literacy, communication and independent living skills
- develop self-advocacy skills
- change students' self-image as dependent and non-participatory
- maximise individual potential

- increase employability.

Many colleges provide some specialist provision (lip-reading, signing, braille, mobility training), but groups coming into a formal learning environment for the first time in many years may require a range of other provision, for example:

- compensatory basic education for those who missed out on compulsory schooling
- programmes to facilitate integration into the community, for example development of everyday living skills, communication and social skills for mentally handicapped adults
- programmes to develop self-advocacy skills
- work-related programmes to increase practical skills.

Wherever possible, adults with special needs should be helped to acquire qualifications. Remploy and NCVQ have recently completed a two-year joint project to open access to vocational qualifications for people with special needs.

Resource-based provision

Some colleges now provide multi-option programmes for special needs groups which combine personalised learning and training options with a core of basic skills. One in Yorkshire has introduced a wide-ranging workshop programme for adults with special needs. This offers a range of non-vocational, pre-vocational and vocational options underpinned by core skills – personal effectiveness and self-management, literacy, communication, numeracy, IT, practical skills, problem-solving, working with others and citizenship. The approach is resource-based and designed to suit individual needs and interests. Students can attend on a full- or part-time basis and the programme is divided into blocks to increase access points.

Integration

The tendency in many colleges has been to provide separate courses for different groups. This may be a necessary starting point but there is a growing consensus that, where possible, students should be integrated into the mainstream to give them the opportunity to study alongside and on equal terms with other students. This may require adaptation of arrangements and provision of special guidance and support.

Teaching strategies

People with learning difficulties require broad and flexible teaching strategies which take account of the fact that their pace of learning may be slower. A smaller staff-student ratio is often necessary, and discrete modules or units of competence such as those encouraged by NCVQ for separate certification are helpful, as they allow students to work at their own speed. Applications for Special Case treatment may have to be made to some examination boards for students who require longer than the prescribed time to complete courses and assessment exercises.

Staff development

Staff development is a key issue in providing a service for adults with special needs. In some colleges, those teaching special needs students have encountered difficulty with colleagues:

> *'Some of our staff thought our deaf students could take the same written exam without modification. Some use health or safety reasons as a way of excluding special needs students.'*

Such problems might be reduced if all staff have access to training programmes containing some modules dealing with the needs and experience of students with special needs.

Inter-agency collaboration

Provision for special needs adults can raise expectations which may not be met outside colleges for a range of reasons: negative attitudes towards the handicapped; lack of employment opportunities; different approaches by other professionals; unco-ordinated support services. This highlights the need for a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach in providing learning opportunities, work placements and staff training. Good practice with regard to special needs students in colleges has often resulted from collaboration and joint provision.

10.6 BLACK ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS

Although all the evidence suggests that black (Asian and Afro-Caribbean) adults want to gain qualifications to improve their employment opportunities, in colleges they tend to be under-represented in high level courses leading to advanced qualifications and job opportunities.

Barriers to access

Many black adults fail to participate in further education/training for a combination of reasons:

- Negative school experiences and racial discrimination in employment, leading people to question the value of education and training.
- Institutional barriers. Although some colleges have succeeded in attracting a large number of black students, in some areas there is a wide 'information gap' between colleges and the black communities in their catchment areas. In such areas black adults have a limited knowledge of what their local college can offer and perceive further education as the preserve of white people. This perception is often reinforced by colleges through:
  - failure to consult with black communities or to identify them as a 'market' segment
  - lack of multi-lingual marketing literature and bilingual outreach workers
  - small numbers of black students, teaching and administrative staff. This acts as a powerful disincentive to potential students and reinforces the college's strong white ethos.

- Unemployment. Black adults experience an unemployment rate disproportionate to their overall numbers in the population. This affects their access to mainstream further education since many vocational courses are geared to people in employment.
- Language needs. People who settled in the UK as adults are more likely to have language difficulties than those who have grown up and attended school in this country. Some left school at the age of 10 or 11 and some who moved here to work in specific industries have literacy learning needs both in English and their mother tongue. Language and literacy problems can have a negative impact on participation for several reasons:
  - entry to many mainstream courses is dependent on possession of (GCSE or O-Level) English passes
  - staff in colleges sometimes fail to distinguish between ability to speak English and general intelligence level. There is a widespread tendency to refer all black students, including those who have already gained advanced qualifications in their country of origin, to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses, irrespective of their potential and other learning needs
  - ESOL classes are often considered low level and have no 'design fit' with mainstream college courses; this inhibits progression to more advanced programmes.

Strategies to encourage participation

The following have been identified as factors which can improve black adult access to college:

- measures to ensure that black groups' interests are represented on governing boards
- measures to ensure that planning processes and procedures (e.g. for WRFE) take account of local black communities and their views
- establishment of equal opportunities or multi-cultural units and working parties to review all areas of policy and practice
- development of recruitment practices that encourage application and appointment of black staff
- appointment of bilingual outreach workers
- establishment of outreach provision, including taster courses
- establishment of mechanisms for dialogue with local black communities and employers and involving them in course and curriculum planning
- production of publicity and marketing materials (in different community languages where appropriate) which contain positive images of black people and a statement emphasising that the college welcomes applications from ethnic minority adults
- special arrangements to accredit advanced qualifications acquired in other countries
- provision which assists black adults' progress to more advanced courses, e.g.
  - foundation and pre-vocational courses with integrated ESOL and progression routes to mainstream

  - modularised programmes
  - ESOL/ABE courses linked with practical skills and with progression routes to mainstream, employment-related courses
  - targeted Access (to higher education) programmes
- course content and materials that avoid ethnocentricity and reflect black people's experience.

Support needs

High drop-out among black adults in colleges has been attributed to:

- feelings of alienation in a predominantly white, middle-class environment
- lack of learning support in numeracy, literacy, English and mother tongue
- lack of black staff to act as role models
- racial stereotyping: a tendency among staff to view black students as a 'problem' and low ability learners
- use of terminology in teaching and assignments which fails to make allowances for individual language difficulties.

These factors help define the kind of support measures that might be introduced to assist black adult participation.

One college has taken steps which have significantly improved access for black adults. These include:

- appointment of black personal tutors and bilingual teaching and pastoral staff
- support courses across the curriculum in mother tongue, English language and study skills
- course content and material related to ethnic groups' experience and background
- adaptation of teaching terminology to assist those with English as a second language
- allowing students with language difficulties to use mother tongue for small group discussion and problem-solving
- monitoring of enrolments, retention, completion, examination results, work experience placements, post-college experience.

Staff development

Training programmes for staff teaching black adults might usefully place emphasis on strategies for:

- conveying an active achiever model
- recognising barriers to achievement
- tackling the issue of racism in the classroom
- supporting black students in work placements.

10.7 Women

Although women are generally well-represented in further education, they tend to be concentrated in specific curriculum areas. Traditionally, further education has been oriented towards male employment and traditional male skills, while female students are clustered in GCSE courses and traditional female areas, such as beauty, hairdressing, secretarial and clerical and catering. This role-stereotyping feeds through into the labour market, perpetuating and reinforcing women's restricted patterns of employment. Single-sex staffing in certain subjects in colleges accentuates the divide between male and female occupational areas.

Barriers to access

Strategies to widen women's access to further education need to be based on recognition of the multiple obstacles that can make their participation difficult, namely:

- family responsibilities and general lack of daycare facilities for both pre-school and school-age children
- cultural pressures and prejudice against women moving out of traditional roles
- lack of self-esteem and confidence
- guilt about doing things for oneself rather than for the family
- lack of money: unequal distribution of income within marriage means that many unwaged married women are without money of their own. Those not in receipt of social security benefits may not be eligible for fee remission or reductions.
- perception of further education as a male environment, a factor exacerbated by the predominance of male staff, particularly in senior positions.

Strategies to encourage participation

The following steps have been taken by colleges to facilitate the participation of women:

- consultation with local women's groups and organisations (e.g. Rhondda College has collaborated with Rhondda Women's Group to investigate local women's education and training needs. The convenor of the group and the college Access tutor worked together, 'shadowing' one another and consulted with members of the group.)
- targeted publicity disseminated in places frequented by women, showing women of different ages and races engaged in different areas of college work
- group targeting (programmes specifically designed for ethnic minority women, single parents, women 'returners', etc.)
- outreach provision in neighbourhood venues: this is particularly welcomed by women whose mobility is constrained by childcare responsibilities

- taster or family days to introduce women's partners and their families to the college environment and its provision
- scheduling which takes account of school times and the availability of public transport
- provision of some childcare facilities or help with childcare costs
- provision of some women-only programmes under Section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act
- the appointment of women tutors, guidance workers and counsellors
- the encouragement of peer study or support groups
- the provision of a base room with study space. Women with families often have no space to study at home and many feel guilty about studying in 'family time'
- review of teaching methods, curricula and teaching materials for stereotyping and gender bias and use of teaching materials reflecting women's experience and perceptions.

Childcare

Provision of good and affordable childcare is a key issue in women's access to further education. Lack of childcare reduces enrolments by women and causes stress and drop-out among actual students. Many colleges have now established creches or other childcare arrangements to encourage women's participation.

Sometimes this measure is LEA-wide. All colleges in Nottinghamshire have a creche. Some, such as one in Wales, have established creches staffed by NNEB tutors and students who use it for work experience. For many colleges, however, establishing childcare provision is difficult for structural and financial reasons and other arrangements may need to be explored such as: use of mobile creches; collaborative arrangements with local Social Services, community or voluntary groups; provision of childminding allowances or voucher schemes. Some colleges are currently exploring the possibility of collaborating with local employers in providing daycare facilities.

Curriculum

There is a strong need to break down sex stereotyping in education and training, first by examining male and female patterns of involvement in vocational education and training; second, by encouraging women to enter all areas of education, and to establish programmes which extend the curriculum beyond traditional 'female' areas. Some women-only courses are vital to get women into areas where they are under-represented. One principal contends that an ESF-funded Women into Technology programme is: 'One of our most successful areas for women: we need positive action to get women into these areas or we can't win'.

It is well established that women appreciate the support of their peer group, particularly during the initial stages of their return to learning and when working in non-traditional (male-dominated) skills. The establishment of women-only access or bridging programmes, linked with different teaching areas, has therefore been found an effective way of increasing women's participation in mainstream provision. Four such courses were established in

a Liverpool college and they increased the number of women in the college significantly.

Courses for women returners

Given that women are expected to return to work in increasing numbers, an area that is growing in importance is provision, in collaboration with local employers, of introductory and re-skilling programmes for women 'returners', with built-in guidance and work experience. One such course has been piloted in Cambridge Regional College. It received initial funding from PICKUP but is now largely funded by local employers to widen the pool of local labour. The first courses have been in office skills and new ones are planned in accountancy and science. Ten of the first fourteen students went straight from the course into local employment. Key factors in the success of the programme have been identified by the tutor-in-charge as:

- the support of local employers and availability of local work experience placements
- provision of guidance
- tutors who are 'returners' themselves and therefore understand students' needs and problems
- some flexibility of timing. To help women readjust to paid work patterns, some pressure is put on them to make readjustments in their domestic lives.

Other areas of provision that have been found popular with women students are:

- 'Second Chance' programmes with built-in guidance and opportunities for career/life planning, and a range of study options connected with mainstream areas. It is important to ensure that such courses have progression possibilities. The informal, student-centred approach used in this kind of course for women works well, but if no efforts are made to link it in with other work and approaches in the college, it can remain marginal while mainstream work continues to be intimidating and impenetrable
- targeted Access (to higher education) courses linked to advanced maths and science courses or specific employment sectors.

One of the problems associated with courses mounted for women is that they are often marginal and badly resourced. This problem has been solved in South Nottinghamshire College, where, following the massive response to a women returners' course, each faculty now offers provision for women as part of its mainstream programme. To secure these courses, faculties apply for funding to the college's Equal Opportunities Committee which has a fund levied equally from each faculty. This system has encouraged the embedding of women's provision within the college's structure and mainstream work.

Accreditation

Women do a vast amount of unpaid work in the home, in the community and through volunteering. It is very important for this work to be accredited and current developments are encouraging this. NCVQ supports the

concept of accreditation for competences acquired in unpaid work and RSA Examinations Board has a policy according to which all RSA vocational qualifications 'lend themselves readily to the accreditation of achievement in unpaid work'.

Staff development

There is a need for a clear training policy on gender which informs training programmes for all staff, as this is frequently perceived as a women's rather than an educational issue.

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ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

YES/ NO	ACTION

Does your college have an equal opportunities policy to which all managers and staff are committed?

Is the policy an all-embracing one or are there separate provisions for different groups?

Is there an action plan for implementing the policy across the institution? Are efforts made to ensure that the principle of equal opportunities applies to all aspects of the college's work?

Has your college established guidelines in such areas as: integrating people with special needs; tackling incidents of racial discrimination; dealing with sexual harassment?

Are the interests of under-represented groups represented on governor teams as recommended in DES Circular 8/88, and do governors representing employment interests include people with knowledge and experience of the training and employment needs of women, ethnic minorities and people with special needs?

Have the support needs of under-represented groups been examined and is your college trying to meet them within existing constraints?

Are access and support measures for under-represented groups short-term, *ad hoc* measures or have resources been allocated to them?

Have all sources of external funding and support for equal opportunities been explored?

Has your college conducted equity monitoring to establish the composition of students and staff? Has this exercise been conducted with reference to the composition of the population in the college's catchment area?

What action has been taken following such monitoring? Have targets been revised?

Giving priority to some target groups can limit access to others. Has your college decided on a stance if open access policies conflict with the outcomes of equity monitoring?

Has your college established any structures such as teams, committees or units, to monitor equal opportunities across disciplines and departmental boundaries?

Has your college appointed a member of staff with full-time responsibility for co-ordinating equal opportunities throughout the institution?

Is this member of staff fully supported?

	YES/ NO	ACTION
Have your staff been allowed time for: • the development of links with the community and employers to increase the participation in further education of specific groups and to provide appropriate work placements? • the co-ordination and monitoring of equal opportunities initiatives within the college? • the development or redesign of courses to suit the interests, needs and experience of under-represented groups? • the development of systems to monitor equal opportunities and collect statistics? • joint in-service training with college, school, youth and careers staff.		
Has your college taken any steps to attract and appoint members of groups under-represented in the staff body?		
Are existing women, ethnic minority and handicapped staff members given full opportunities for staff development and promotion?		
Are students invited to participate in institutional meetings to bring their experiences to bear on the curriculum and college practices?		
Do staff development programmes include training in working with specific groups and are staff experienced in such work given the opportunity to transmit their knowledge and insights to other members of staff?		
Are under-represented groups just offered special or introductory programmes or are efforts made to integrate them into mainstream work?		
Is the college collaborating with other agencies, organisations and providers in order to provide a service for under-represented groups?		

ISSUES FOR STAFF

YES/ NO	ACTION

Are you aware of the college's equal opportunities policy and do you try to apply it in all areas of work?

Do you believe that equal opportunities in the college is the responsibility of a particular appointee or unit or do you believe that all staff members should play a part in implementing equal opportunities?

Do those involved with recruiting and teaching particular groups collaborate with other agencies and organisations involved with them?

Are you fully aware of the particular barriers and support needs of groups with special needs, black students and women?

Are allowances made in teaching/learning methods for the particular problems and needs of certain groups?

Are students from disadvantaged groups helped and encouraged to progress from special courses to mainstream programmes offering qualifications?

Are you able to keep up-to-date with information and developments relating to groups such as those with special needs (e.g. social security regulations, new equipment and teaching aids)?

Have you participated in any staff development programmes to help you work with specific groups?

Have those with experience and expertise in this area been given the opportunity in college meetings or staff development programmes to disseminate information and experience to their colleagues?

11 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

All the areas of policy and practice discussed in previous chapters have implications for the roles and skills of college staff. Staff development is a key issue in the implementation of change and is the best way of reinforcing curriculum and organisational developments. This chapter considers:

11.1 Changing staff roles
11.2 Adapting to an adult clientele
11.3 Skills required in specific areas
11.4 A staff development policy
11.5 Delivery of staff development
11.6 Accreditation of staff skills

11.1 CHANGING STAFF ROLES

Many of the recent developments in further education are putting considerable pressure on staff and having an impact on their roles and responsibilities. The growing emphasis on learner-centred approaches requires staff accustomed to traditional formal teaching method, to develop a range of new skills and greater flexibility in response to unforeseen demands. Moreover, as more students engage in open and flexible learning, teaching staff need to acquire skills in processes such as initial diagnosis, guidance and counselling, negotiation of learning objectives and individual learning schedules. They may also be called upon to undertake in-house development and adaptation of learning materials. The development of new accreditation and credit transfer schemes involving progression routes between different programme areas and levels means that staff previously involved in a single teaching area may need to become involved in team teaching and initiatives which cut across traditional departmental and subject boundaries.

Administrative and support staff are also having to adjust their roles and responsibilities in response to new developments. Innovations such as continuous enrolment, individualised learning schedules, flexible methods of payment and new management systems are all making new demands on staff operating administrative procedures.

As colleges evolve towards a more adult-oriented system, the most efficient and effective institutions will be those which have a coherent staff development strategy that is integrated with institutional and curriculum developments: a strategy which ensures that all staff understand, and are fully prepared for, the directions in which the college is going. In many cases, however, college staff are expected to pick up the new and specific skills demanded in some developing areas of work, 'on the job'.

11.2 ADAPTING TO AN ADULT CLIENTELE

The basic premise on which this report is based is that adult learners have characteristics and learning requirements which are different from those of younger students. This has a number of implications for staff development.

Adults come into education voluntarily with a plurality of purposes and personal circumstances

Consequently, staff need knowledge and understanding of:

- college recruitment policies and their own role in marketing
- the nature of new client groups
- personal barriers (such as the effects of previous unsatisfactory experience of education; unemployment; implications of commitments such as parental responsibilities, dependent relatives, shift work, 'availability for work' rule)
- agencies in the area who can help with such issues (e.g. CAB, careers and guidance services)
- the value of collaboration
- institutional barriers such as environment, attitudes, course content, etc.
- student expectations and desired outcomes.

Staff need opportunities to develop skills in:

- guiding adults towards appropriate programmes and levels of study
- identifying barriers and devising strategies for overcoming them
- negotiating individual learning plans
- flexible teaching methods
- managing a varied and complex classroom situation
- encouraging learners to analyse their own skills.

Adults bring greater experience to learning than young people

Staff therefore need knowledge and understanding of: transferable experience and competences, and opportunities to develop skills in such areas as:

- initial diagnosis and assessment of previous experience and achievement
- guidance and counselling
- using student experience as a basis for learning
- developing approaches which recognise learning as a partnership between equals.

Adults participate in education/training at different stages of their lives and may use a range of providers and sectors

Staff need knowledge and understanding of:

- transference of qualifications, credits, skills

- the range and diversity of learning and accreditation opportunities
- developments in education (e.g. NVQs, credit accumulation, distance learning)
- progression possibilities.

Staff need opportunities to develop skills in:

- information-gathering
- identifying and assessing skills
- modularising courses
- flexible learning approaches
- collaborating and negotiating with other education/training providers and agencies.

11.3 SKILLS REQUIRED IN SPECIFIC AREAS

Outreach

Outreach activity is an essential part of college work with adults but, as yet, there appear to be few training programmes that actually train people in outreach skills. Staff involved in outreach require wide-ranging knowledge of both college provision and services and those of other agencies. They also need ability and practical skills in such areas as:

- networking
- communication
- negotiation
- needs identification
- curriculum design and development
- educational guidance
- marketing procedures.

While there is evidence that many outreach staff have these skills in abundance, there is a danger of not using them sufficiently to contribute to staff development within the college. In some institutions, outreach staff have no means of feeding their experience of working with adult groups in the community and the workplace to college-based staff. A regional staff development officer working with colleges in the north-west stresses the importance of in-house staff development which involves staff at all levels in the institution. Her sessions are organised so that outreach experience can inform managerial policy and the work of all college-based staff faced with new client groups and different ways of working.

Access courses

Access courses are targeted at adults, so teaching approaches need to take into account those factors outlined in 11.2. An HMI inspection of Access courses in colleges in 1990 found that although tutors were 'responding admirably' most had acquired their skills on the job and few had received any specialised training. The report recommends that staff be given training in the basic principles and practices of counselling (HMI, 1990).

Competence-based learning

Similarly, reports on college delivery of competence-led programmes leading to NVQs often praise the dedication and enthusiasm of staff but observe that in-house staff training is irrelevant to this kind of work. Staff involved in competence-led learning need training to help them perform a multitude of complex functions:

- collaborating with industry in the design, delivery and assessment of courses
- designing and structuring courses or course units that enable learners to acquire and apply specified skills and knowledge in the workplace, and have their competences assessed according to specified standards
- identifying approaches appropriate to learning and assessment in the workplace
- integrating knowledge and practical work and applying it to work experience
- encouraging workers to acquire wider skills relating to task management, performing a variety of roles, transferable skills, adapting to change
- monitoring learners' progress and performance in different contexts and locations
- developing work simulation schemes
- developing appropriate strategies for workplace assessment and training workplace assessors (FEU, 1989).

Providing training for employers

Staff involved in planning and implementing training programmes for employers also require skills in a wide range of general areas:

- marketing research and strategies
- identification of training needs
- consultancy skills
- presentation skills
- contract negotiation and procedures
- costing and pricing
- strategic planning and programming
- operational planning and management
- resource management
- client and customer management
- training trainers
- producing training materials/modularising materials
- monitoring and evaluation.

In implementing tailored programmes such as PICKUP, staff will also need:

- a general understanding of the business concerned
- the ability to design and develop a curriculum to meet specific needs and objectives
- flexible teaching skills and the ability to facilitate learning styles appropriate for adults.

In addition to these areas of expertise staff obviously also need the relevant technical knowledge and skills. If colleges are to respond adequately to employer training and retraining, their own staff will need regular updating of technical knowledge, particularly in areas such as information technology, where the pace of change is rapid.

The skills required by support staff involved in all these areas of work should not be underestimated. Administrative, reception and secretarial staff (often the first point of contact between adults and the college) are increasingly having to demonstrate reception, information, communication and guidance skills. The variety of skills needed are illustrated in an FEU document which has itemised the diverse tasks required of *all* support staff involved in PICKUP work: course secretary, telephonist, room administrator, car park attendant, receptionist, caretaker/porter caterer and technician (Thomas, 1990).

11.4 A COLLEGE STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICY

As there is some overlap between the skills required in different areas of work with adults, staff development for particular approaches need not be viewed in isolation, but can be part of an integrated staff development policy. The point of departure for such a policy might be a training audit within the college to identify corporate and individual training needs and the resources available.

To underpin and improve its courses and services for adults, a staff development scheme could usefully:

- take advantage of the staff expertise developed in *all* areas of a college's work with adults (for example, outreach staff, adult and continuing education tutors, and staff with experience of ET tailored short courses and action planning, would be major source of expertise)
- pay attention to the process as well as the content of learning
- ensure that part-time and support staff as well as full-time staff have entitlement and access to staff development activities and accredited training.

As colleges seek to expand and diversify their roles and the numbers of adult students grow, the work of part-time and support staff becomes increasingly important. Much of the work with adults in outreach locations and in college adult and continuing education departments, has been carried out by part-timers and their role may increase with the introduction of short courses and NVQs. The previous chapters have also stressed the growing importance of non-teaching staff in colleges, particularly in regard to their public relations and student support functions. Staff development for these two groups needs higher priority than hitherto, especially as colleges will depend increasingly on team work for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

11.5 DELIVERY OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In any college, delivery of staff development will be determined within such parameters as the LEA and college strategic plan, institutional developments, curriculum policy and the INSET budget. In-house staff development sessions can be supplemented by the dissemination of staff experience through bulletins, working papers, staff seminars and team meetings.

As well as in-house development, colleges can:

- establish joint schemes. Staff development activities organised in collaboration with other institutions and sectors can be more efficient and cost-effective
- send staff on 'shadowing' or work secondments to firms to observe working practices and gain hands-on experience
- release staff to attend retraining courses (and arrange suitable staff replacements for them)
- use the possibilities offered by regional networks, e.g.:
  - Regional Advisory Councils (most RACs organise short courses for FE staff across the curriculum range and have a PICKUP staff development officer. All have an officer supporting the introduction of NVQs)
  - Open College Networks (these bring staff from diverse educational contexts together in forums, seminars and workshops to work collaboratively on particular curriculum areas, accreditation, preparation of programme submissions, recognition and moderation)
- take advantage of national programmes. The REPLAN programme, for example, has involved college staff in different areas of England and Wales in a wide variety of staff development activities to develop skills in working with the adult unemployed and particular adult groups. Many colleges have now incorporated the REPLAN national training modules into their initial teacher training and in-service programmes. These modules provide a comprehensive package of many core curriculum issues.

11.6 ACCREDITATION

The City and Guilds 7307 Further and Adult Education Teachers Certificate, Open University courses E872–E877 and E355, and schemes offered by the RACs are among the main accreditation routes courses for staff seeking qualification for work with adults. Attempts are also being made to accredit staff development nationally. A project on the accreditation of staff development in PICKUP is currently being conducted at Wolverhampton Polytechnic.

The City and Guilds course is currently being reworked into a competence, unit-based format. A modular training scheme which acknowledges prior learning and experience and accredits competences to the specified standards of a training and development lead body would be the most

effective way of offering qualifications to the many college staff, both full-time and part-time, who have already acquired considerable skills and experience working with adult learners.

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ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

	YES/ NO	ACTION
Has your college conducted an audit to identify staff development needs throughout the institution?		
Does your college have a staff development policy which is strategic rather than funding-led?		
Does your staff development policy support college planning objectives and is it integrated with all curriculum and organisational developments within the college?		
Has your college appointed a staff development officer at a senior level?		
Is staff development offered to all staff including part-time tutors and support staff?		
Is in-house staff development relevant to the new demands being made on college staff or does it relate to traditional courses and teaching modes for full-time students?		
Have any in-house training sessions been provided for staff involved in developing new teaching/learning approaches and supporting students engaged in open and flexible learning?		
Is there recognition that staff development has a crucial role to play in planning an effective response to the needs of adult client groups?		
Has there been a radical reconsideration of the skills, knowledge and attitudes required by staff dealing with adult learners?		
Is there an understanding of the need to change teaching styles to accommodate adult learners?		
Is there a commitment to resource allocation for staff development in relation to adult learners?		
Are staff released for attendance at external training activities relevant to work with adult learners?		
Does your college make full use of LEA training grants and regional staff development events and activities?		
Has your college collaborated with any other providers or institutions in providing staff development activities?		

12 COLLABORATION

Previous chapters have indicated that many of the processes involved in providing a quality service for adults require colleges to liaise and collaborate with other organisations and sectors. The importance of this is frequently stressed by those working on improving opportunities for adult learners.

> *The individual, industry and other services and the community at large are best served when there is close collaboration in planning and organisation between all actual and potential providers and integration of effort wherever it benefits adult learners (Marks & Elsdon, 1990).*

This chapter considers:

12.1 Why collaboration is needed in the education/training of adults
12.2 What stimulates collaboration
12.3 Links with other providers
12.4 Links with employers
12.5 Key issues in collaboration
12.6 The benefits of collaboration

12.1 WHY COLLABORATION IS NEEDED IN THE EDUCATION/TRAINING OF ADULTS

The education and training of adults involves a wide range of statutory and voluntary services and organisations. A really effective education service for adults would therefore involve a pooling of resources and expertise, and be built on shared initiatives in areas such as identification of needs and curriculum development.

Current developments in further education reinforce this view. Many of the changes most likely to affect adult learners – the introduction of APL, NVQs and credit accumulation and transfer schemes – entail, of necessity, co-operation between different education and training providers and between education institutions and other bodies.

> The shift towards co-operative work has also been encouraged by the tendency of national agencies and initiatives to fund consortia of institutions or groups working in partnership to pilot new educational initiatives which benefit adults. Examples include: the Training Agency-funded National Feasibility Study into the Accreditation of Prior Learning which is being conducted at a number of further education and other institutions; the Training Agency-funded project 'Learning Gain in Further Education and Achievement-Based Resourcing' which involves Wirral Metropolitan College, Milton Keynes College and Wirral and Buckingham Education Authorities; and a Development Fund project, based in

six FE colleges across the country, which is developing guidelines on the implementation of NVQs for learners with special needs.

Collaboration has also been promoted by the spread of Open College Networks, the Open Tech and government initiatives such as REPLAN, which have brought together providers from different sectors in activities to assist the planning, managing and facilitation of learning opportunities for adults. Colleges now also need to collaborate closely with the Training and Enterprise Councils in the provision of training and many are represented on TEC boards, working parties and task groups.

In spite of these developments furthering collaboration, recent research involving over 30 further education colleges, found few attempts to collaborate on a wide scale in providing a better service for adults. Instead, the researchers detected signs of a 'growing and sometimes destructive competition', a 'widespread sense of complacency', and college 'isolation from much of the expertise and training resources in the education of adults'(Marks & Elsdon, 1990).

Yet there are numerous areas where co-operation and collaboration might not only enhance the service provided to college clients and participants but also benefit the college itself by offering opportunities to pool resources, share costs and disseminate information about its activities: marketing (collaborative approaches to publicity, promotion and recruitment); guidance (joining a network and through TAPs); staff development (initiating partnerships or joining consortia to offer joint training events); development of open learning materials (through joining an Open College Network or other consortia of providers).

The nature and extent of college collaborative activities are inevitably variable and patchy. Most have experience of certain types of partnership, for example, with local employers, other providers and regional bodies including, increasingly, TECs. However, relationships with voluntary groups and organisations, many of which are concerned with the education and training of adults, are generally not so well developed.

12.2 WHAT STIMULATES COLLABORATION

New resources and staff appointments

In many colleges, collaboration has increased dramatically as a result of injections of resources and staff for work with adults, (for example, through involvement in REPLAN projects). In others, the appointment of co-ordinators for the education of adults with a whole-college brief has increased both internal and external collaboration.

Involvement in local or regional networks

Participation in regional forums, advisory committees, Open College Networks or local educational advice and guidance services for adults have frequently resulted in colleges forming closer co-operative ties with other

sectors or providers. Educational guidance networks have been a particular focus for provider collaboration in many regions.

The establishment of college liaison structures

Some colleges have employer or community liaison teams, e.g. Preston College, and Salford College of Technology which has a centralised External Relations Unit with the functions of:

- linking with industry and co-ordinating external activities for the college
- linking with city services (e.g. economic development unit (EDU), planning, recreation and cultural services, treasurer's department, city administration, local councillors, etc.)
- linking with public bodies (TA, DTI)
- organising full-cost courses
- undertaking consultancy
- managing externally-funded projects
- recruiting and supporting foreign students
- marketing college activities.

Working with the EDU means that the college is informed on new economic developments and can plan training with new employers before they move into the area.

Adult access initiatives

Many colleges have developed or strengthened links with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies involved with adults, as part of their overall activities to widen access. For example, colleges wishing to target provision at groups such as the elderly and people with disabilities or learning difficulties have found it useful to liaise with specialist agencies and services in contact with such groups.

Outreach activities

Chapter 3 has highlighted the importance of collaborating with other agencies in developing outreach activities for adults in the community. The report of the Outreach College Project confirms that the success of a community-led outreach approach strongly depends on inter-agency co-operation and collaboration. This, it is suggested, is best achieved through a local networking process which includes: information exchange; sharing of expertise and resources; identification of gaps in provision and emerging needs; joint planning to respond to unmet needs; shared publicity; mapping of possible entry points; identification of progression routes; guidance and referrals. The report suggests ways in which a college can initiate this process (FEU, 1989).

12.3 LINKS WITH OTHER PROVIDERS

Collaboration with other education and training can be valuable to colleges that wish to improve or expand their services for adult learners. Adults' post-school learning experience tends to be fragmentary and diverse. The

intermittent nature of their learning needs necessitates both easy links and transitions between different areas of the post-school system, and recognition of learning conducted in different parts of the system.

Recent developments affecting adult learners, involving new access routes, flexible delivery and changed institutional structures, have encouraged many colleges to form partnerships with a range of other providers. Links between further education and the rest of post-school education have been strengthened in particular by:

- the Education Reform Act which asks for a description of links
- the establishment of Open College Networks requiring collaboration on standards, credit transfer and progression routes
- schemes to increase the participation of specific groups in which provider collaboration is a key element
- the development of core curricula and new qualifications which have required consultation and discussion on a wide scale
- growth of Access (to HE) courses which are mainly delivered by further education colleges in collaboration with higher education institutions
- an increase in franchising management between higher and further education.

The number of higher education institutions franchising courses to further education colleges is growing as the sector increases its student intake. This often involves modular and part-time degree courses, both of which appeal particularly to adults.

> Examples include Leicester Polytechnic, which is franchising its new arts and humanities modular degree to colleges at Derby and Corby; Lancashire Polytechnic which franchises work to ten colleges and where part-time degree students begin their degree with one year in an FE college; and Kingston Polytechnic which franchises courses to three local further education colleges and a college of agriculture. According to the Academic Registrar at the latter, this process aids recruitment and opens access to non-traditional students by enabling students taking an HND and other vocational courses to spend their first and sometimes second year in a college before moving to the polytechnic. Teaching staff can move between the two institutions and there are shared facilities and equipment. Funding is also shared between the polytechnic and the colleges (*Education*, 1990).

12.4 LINKS WITH EMPLOYERS

Colleges have traditionally co-operated closely with industry in areas such as off-the-job training, day and evening release classes, work placements, industrial secondments, consultancy and customised training for specific companies. In recent years, college-employer relations have been intensified and activities such as work-shadowing, specific worker updating, workplace assessment and employer use of college facilities and expertise, have increased. Developments such as Local Management of Colleges, stronger

employer representation on college governing bodies, increased competition and rapid changes in skills needs, suggest that college-employer liaison is likely to become even more important. The benefits are mutual: colleges wish to market their services and expertise and employers need to invest in key skills.

> Most colleges provide not just one but a range of services for local firms: for example, a college industrial unit in Dorset provides training and consultants and offers a product design service to electronics firms; a college of Art and Technology in Carmarthenshire undertakes design and product development projects for firms, and provides local companies with training and short courses in computer-aided design and computer numerical control; a college micro-centre in the Midlands is helping a local engineering company to update skills through training and consultancy in microcomputing; Salford College of Technology has assisted employers in numerous ways; for Cussons UK Ltd, the college set up a working party with directors, managers, trades unions and workforce representatives, prior to designing a training scheme. It also worked closely with the City of Salford Personnel department to train local people for the hotel industry, in preparation for new hotels being built in the area. In addition, the college runs Salford Business Club for small companies and belongs to the North-West Food Technology Consortium (Training Agency, 1990 and FEU/DTI, 1989).

The provision of NVQs necessitates particularly close collaboration with specific industries and firms. Southdown College, Portsmouth has built close links with the hairdressing trade through its work in developing a full NVQ in hairdressing. In 1989, all local hairdressers were invited into the college for a Training Trainers course and, as a result of the contacts made, local salons formed an employers' association and applied for membership of the local TEC as the voice of the hairdressing industry in the area.

12.5 KEY ISSUES IN COLLABORATION

In any collaborative activity there will be issues arising from vested interests and concern for institutional autonomy. Ground rules need to be established regarding purpose, accountability, responsibility and ownership, and the operational mandate needs to be very explicit. Unless such guidelines are established 'collaboration' may just amount to a personal relationship.

The evidence from research and development projects suggests that effective collaboration in providing a good education service for adults results from:

- the commitment of key people
- shared perceptions (of a task or goal)
- incentives to work together (funding, recognition, status)
- clear, mutual understanding of the agreement (or 'contract') established between agencies
- some balance or equality in the relationship, irrespective of differences in size and resources.

12.6 THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Collaboration can result in maximisation of quality and efficiency by:

- reducing duplication of identical services
- ensuring that services are complementary and that each is provided by the most appropriate organisation
- encouraging recognition of the strengths and specialisms of other organisations
- tapping into other sources of knowledge and expertise
- sharing development costs.

The advantages of a collaborative approach are not confined to the beneficiaries: a college can gain an enhanced image in the community. During the Outreach College Project, in which Cleveland Technical College was involved in networking and sharing some of its resources with the community, organisers were aware that the college was: 'signalling its commitment to community-based education in a general sense; raising its profile as a community resource and establishing a sounder base for future outreach collaboration possibilities' (FEU, 1989).

There is no doubt that well planned and negotiated joint developments can, in many cases, save money and, through the pooling of expertise, lead to more successful learner and college outcomes.

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ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

YES/NO	ACTION

Has your college established any structures or posts specifically for external liaison?

Is your college involved in co-operative activities with other organisations and agencies at all levels: local – local employers; local education/training providers, careers services, etc.; regional – TECs; regional networks and advisory groups; national – TEED, DTI, FEU; international – EC organisations; exchanges/partnerships with European institutions?

Is your college represented on TEC boards or working groups? Is it an active member of any local or regional networks such as guidance networks, open college federations?

In its work with adult learners, does your college make full use of other local or regional sources of expertise, such as the LEA adult education service, other education/training institutions and organisations, and providers of initial or in-service training of staff working with adults?

Does your college have mechanisms for collecting information about adult education/training opportunities elsewhere, and for disseminating information about its own courses and services for adults to other agencies?

Has your college collaborated with other statutory and voluntary institutions and organisations concerned with the education/training of adults in any specific activities such as: joint publicity, surveys of local adult education/training needs, joint provision, shared use of resources?

How far are the views and interests of adult learners and specific groups in the community represented on college committees and the governor body?

Is your college actively collaborating with other education institutions in facilitating adult access and progression through Access courses, credit accumulation and transfer schemes, APL arrangements, or franchising arrangements?

Is your college involved with other education institutions in any specially-funded projects to pilot initiatives? If so, have any benefits or problems been identified and has the experience been used to inform a college policy on collaboration?

Has your college taken full advantage of government funding sources for collaborative work with employers: e.g. DES PICKUP programme: TEED (formerly Training Agency) Business Growth Training programme (BGT Option 4)?

Has your college collaborated with specific industries and Lead Bodies in identifying the specific competences to be assessed for NVQs?

	YES/NO	ACTION
To what extent is your college collaborating with local firms in identifying specific needs in the areas of product design, consultancy, training and retraining?		
Does your college liaise regularly with local structures such as Economic Development Units, local councils, local government services, local employer networks or federations?		
Has your college liaised with voluntary agencies with experience of representing and responding to the needs of disadvantaged adult groups?		
Have managers weighed up the potential benefits of collaboration in the education/training of adults to offset any perceived threats to a college's autonomy and vested interests?		
On what basis are existing college collaborative activities conducted? Are they informal arrangements which depend on personal relationships between individuals, or have they been formally worked out with the organisations concerned, with definitions of clear operational guidelines and lines of accountability?		

13 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Information on performance is regularly needed by LEAs and colleges to judge progress in the achievement of established objectives. Growing demand for public accountability and increasing competition from other providers are requiring colleges to put even greater stress on monitoring and evaluation. This chapter examines:

13.1 The role and nature of evaluation
13.2 Externally determined measures
13.3 LEA quality control
13.4 College quality control
13.5 Data to be collected in relation to a college's service for adult clients
13.6 Evaluating course-based activities for adults
13.7 Client and customer feedback
13.8 Evaluating non-course-based activities
13.9 Collecting data
13.10 A cost-benefit analysis

13.1 THE ROLE AND NATURE OF EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation acts as a quality control mechanism, enabling managers to check that colleges are both fulfilling the roles defined in mission statements and meeting the requirements of corporate and individual clients in terms of course availability, quality and price. It is a complex process, however, as colleges are multi-purpose institutions and the different groups involved – paymasters, clients, students, managers and staff – may judge 'success' by different yardsticks.

The three essential stages in any performance review are establishing clear objectives; monitoring how a college is progressing in defined areas, and taking action. The parameters for evaluation of a further education institution are:

- measures set outside the institution (DES, LEAs)
- measures or targets used by the college to monitor and evaluate its own performance according to its mission statement and strategic plan
- course team reviews to monitor effectiveness of provision.

How relevant are these in measuring quality in the services provided for adult learners?

13.2 EXTERNALLY DETERMINED MEASURES

The best measures of performance will be those which clearly and unambiguously define a service. According to the Unit for Adult Continuing Education (UDACE), the education and training of adults should be measured in terms relevant to the purposes of the service, including aspects such as personal development, learner autonomy and equity (Powell, 1990). However, colleges are expected to monitor their performance for efficiency and effectiveness, according to nationally laid down criteria:

- staff/student ratio (SSR)
- non-teacher costs per full-time equivalent (FTE)
- course costs per FTE
- completion rate/cost per completing FTE
- qualification rate/costs per FTE
- progression/placement rate per completing FTE.

As these indicators have been designed in relation to resource allocation, they focus more on outcomes and financial targets than on educational targets. They are too narrow for a complex, multi-faceted service such as FE and are placing constraints on the system's ability to change.

For colleges with a majority of adult students, the diversity of types of provision, of lengths of attendance and modes of study, present problems in applying these measures as they assume course-based activity and relate to the norm of a standard full-time student model. Collecting data on full-time students is easier than collecting data on adults participating on a discontinuous, part-time learning basis. The DES indicators fail to take account of the range of adult experience and ability, and the extent of non-course-based activity required to meet adult needs. Pre-access outreach work, for example, is difficult to record and can take a long time to bring results in terms of programme attendance.

Purely statistical indicators also fail to take account of an important characteristic of adult learners: their diverse range of learning objectives. The conventional measures of success in learning – examination results and qualifications – are relevant only to students looking for known vocational or progression outcomes; they are not relevant to all adult learners, a significant number of whom enrol on non-examined courses, while those engaging in competence-based or unit-based programmes need their learning successes to be measured in 'small bites' – completion of a single module or acquisition of a certain skill. In addition, completion rates may be a misleading guide to educational success as adult drop-out is frequently due to non-educational factors such as domestic pressures, family commitments, financial problems and job acquisition.

These factors, cumulatively, suggest that measurement of quality in relation to adult learners requires the establishment of nationally agreed indicators which reflect both the characteristics and expectations of adult students and the nature and purpose of the educational activities in which they engage.

This means defining 'success' in learning in broader terms than examination pass rates and defining specific outcomes for each learning programme.

13.3 LEA QUALITY CONTROL

There should be a relationship between LEA strategic plans and college development plans. Many LEAs now have equity as one of their criteria for evaluation of effectiveness and others are devising measures which take account to the changing nature of further education and the increase in adult learners.

> Gloucestershire, for example, has established a framework for quality assurance as part of its strategic plan for further education. To establish a framework for quality assurance, a joint LEA/college working group has conducted a position audit of front-end counselling and guidance, delivery and institutional issues. This exercise identified a number of objectives to be achieved in relation to quality control. These cover a wide spectrum including strategies for pre-entry guidance, training for guidance and other support staff, marketing and publicity, assessment and APL, establishment of course teams; establishment of participation targets for under-represented groups (Gloucestershire LEA, 1991).

13.4 COLLEGE QUALITY CONTROL

Many colleges are moving towards self-evaluation conducted by course teams and audited by the institution and LEA.

To ensure quality assurance in a college, indicators are needed which demonstrate that different elements of strategic planning are being achieved in practice (e.g. college mission statements and policies on access, equity and entitlement). The basic question to be addressed here is whether the quality of the college service is different for adults than for 16–19-year-olds and if so, how it can be measured?

Progress in further education is usually measured against the achievement of targets to do with the kind and quantity of courses, numbers of students enroled, student hours, qualifications gained, etc. Assessment of quality, however, is more difficult and involves evaluating the effectiveness of provision not just in relation to inputs and outcomes but in terms of 'fitness for purpose'. This means examining processes such as the teaching, content and delivery of programmes, for appropriateness and relevance to the purpose, interests and expectations of client groups and individual learners.

As argued throughout this report, adults require responsive provision, flexibility of delivery and a student-centred, supportive approach. Thus, evaluation needs to relate to the processes of needs analysis; programme

design in relation to identified needs and implementation: the ways in which adult learning is facilitated and supported.

To take account of these factors, a thorough system of consultation and feedback needs to be built into college services to obtain data on quality at:

- student level
- institutional level (staff concerned with delivery of programmes and those concerned specifically with quality control)
- organisational level (the firms using college).

Such feedback will show whether there is a match between intention, performance and results and how effective the organisation has been in meeting the needs of its clients. This will enable managers to set new targets and build on good practice.

13.5 DATA TO BE COLLECTED IN RELATION TO A COLLEGE'S SERVICE FOR ADULT CLIENTS

Key areas of information colleges need to collect with regard to their services for adult students are:

- volume of adult clients (by age group) requesting assistance and services from the college
- volume of target groups reached and the extent to which this accords with the college mission statement and the composition of the population of its catchment area
- profile of existing students. (Equity monitoring at Preston College during 1989-90 revealed that ethnic minority students and people from specific local areas were under-represented. As a result, the college reassessed its marketing and recruitment strategies.)
- the nature, extent and outcomes of outreach activities
- profile of clients using the college educational guidance service; the nature of enquiries and feedback
- the extent to which the college is meeting local education and training needs (matched against data from market research, outreach, guidance and admissions services)
- the extent to which the college is providing short courses and open and flexible modes of delivery to meet adult demand and circumstances
- the availability of support services for adult learners (counselling, basic skills, study skills and language support, childcare, etc.)
- adult retention/completion rates with reference to motivations, patterns of participation and reasons for drop-out
- extent of in-house staff development and staff attendance on external training courses in areas such as updating, teaching skills in relation to adult learners, marketing/enterprise skills, industrial secondment
- numbers of support staff in relation to adult student numbers
- extent and nature of college involvement with external organisations in providing services for adults.

Such data will assist colleges in establishing appropriate targets in areas such as marketing, employer and community liaison, curriculum design and delivery, staff development and support services.

13.6 EVALUATING COURSE-BASED ACTIVITIES FOR ADULTS

A key question for colleges is how to measure success in adult learning. A straightforward input and output analysis is possible in areas such as catering or hairdressing where students leave the college with employable skills, but it is less easy to apply to short courses or open and flexible learning for adults. In these cases, there is a need to identify 'value added':

> *An analysis of "value added" – the difference in students before and after a learning programme, with emphasis on the assessment of individual achievement can provide an indicator of the quality of learning undertaken and is the only rational basis for the assessment of effectiveness (Powell, 1990).*

Adult learners' experiences and achievements should be examined in the light of the facts that:

- individuals have different objectives and starting points and their objectives may change through and, as a result of, the learning process
- adult learning has a range of likely outcomes some of which defy quantification (e.g. increase in confidence).

The Joint Efficiency Study has admitted that educational results such as social and personal development and contributory factors such as the ability and motivations of students at the start of learning cannot easily be quantified. Nonetheless, various groups involved in the education of adults are currently examining ways of measuring quality and success in adult learning. UDACE is conducting a development project to develop a 'toolkit' of assessment techniques and measures which can demonstrate effectiveness in delivery of education and training of adults; and, as part of a project, 'Learning Gain in FE', Wirral Metropolitan College is developing indicators that will represent the value added in terms of individual achievement. An inventory of personal effectiveness statements has been devised to enable students to record personal skills (Wirral Metropolitan College).

13.7 CLIENT AND CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

To measure quality in adult learning therefore involves both hard and soft data. The latter would include student and employer perceptions and reactions in relation to quality of courses, delivery, support services and general college ethos. Such data collected in a structured manner is essential to the evaluation of quality in learning. Brixton College, for example, is considering introducing as a primary performance indicator, the perceived achievement of outcomes defined by adult students early in the learning process.

Student feedback can be elicited at several stages:

- *at the start of the course*: discussion or survey of expectations, anxieties
- *on the course*: what have students learned? Are they meeting their objectives? Is the course fulfilling expectations?
- *at the end of the course*: have the desired outcomes been achieved? Can acquired knowledge and skills be applied to work situations, etc?

Some of the qualitative data can be quantified by calculating percentages of adults who have met their own pre-defined goals; those who ascribe a particular value to the learning experience and those who have achieved specific outcomes. Similarly, clients' perceptions of the college, its ethos and facilities can be summarised and presented in a quantitative form according to the frequency of particular views expressed.

Measuring client and customer satisfaction is also essential in the evaluation of the effectiveness of college workplace provision. Here, evaluation would entail:

- liaison with employees and their supervisors to discover their perceptions of the processes and outcomes of training
- monitoring of courses to ensure that instruction is consistent with the learning goals of individual employees and the overall goals of the company
- identification of perceived outcomes:
  - for the worker (have needs been met? Has the worker improved status and work opportunities? Has s/he acquired a better understanding of the demands of the workplace?)
  - for the employer (what benefits has the training/retraining programme had for the organisation as a whole?).

These processes are not always carried out, as indicated in an HMI report on PICKUP provision, which notes that a number of colleges have failed to establish a management structure to provide an overview of PICKUP provision, to ensure adequate monitoring and evaluation of current activities and to capitalise on developments and good practice (HMI, 1989:8.4).

> In some colleges, however, work on evaluating the quality of work with local companies is well advanced. Percival Whitley College of FE (now Calderdale College), for example, makes detailed records of categories of clients and modes of training delivery and maintains detailed records of client destinations and successes. After every short course, the college Industrial Liaison Team distributes an evaluation questionnaire to employers and, 3 to 4 weeks later, makes a follow-up visit to the firm to see if training had fully met the firm's as well as the participants' needs (FEU, 1990).

For quantitative assessment purposes, hard data on college work with employees might include specific targets to see whether objectives have been achieved in a cost and price-effective way (student numbers, student hours, number of college departments and staff involved, degree of self-financing, gross earnings).

13.8 EVALUATING NON-COURSE-BASED ACTIVITIES

Many college services for adults are non-course-based, and there can be difficulties in recording and evaluating the work involved. In Manchester LEA, working groups have highlighted the need to develop indicators specifically for non-course-based work. A city-wide group has measured the weekly staff hours spent on activities such as drop-in, outreach, parent education, volunteer training, support of non-statutory groups, advice and community arts activities in three colleges. In doing this, the team has applied two approaches: quantitative (finding ways to measure and record the work to ensure that it is visible and funded); and qualitative (developing an evaluation programme for staff that will encompass all the identified activities). The approaches are linked to the monitoring of the LEA scheme of delegation.

13.9 COLLECTING DATA

Effective use of any measure of performance is dependent on the availability and recording of accurate data and the existence of an efficient management information system. Basic statistical data is readily obtainable in colleges, but information systems do not always include learners who are attending irregularly or on a drop-in basis and who do not undergo formal enrolment. The overall number of adult learners may be underestimated if the extent and nature of use of college facilities are not recorded.

Data from documents such as enrolment forms does not always distinguish between different groups of students. For equity purposes, some colleges are now involved in more detailed monitoring. In Lambeth, colleges monitor enrolment forms for race, gender, disability, special educational needs, language (whether bi- or multi-lingual), age, borough of residence and status (employment, unemployed women returner, employer sponsored). It should be stressed that collecting this kind of evidence requires enrolment forms and questionnaires to be phrased in terms relevant and appropriate to people over 21, and mediating strategies may be needed to explain why the information is being sought.

Qualitative evidence on the effectiveness and appropriateness of course content, teaching/learning approaches and college facilities can be sought from clients, students and staff through interviews, discussion, well designed and tested questionnaires (using samples rather than the whole student body) and monitoring features built into courses (for example, regular review and feedback sessions). Students can also be involved in course evaluation through small student forums which allow dialogue with course co-ordinators and feed into the curriculum development process.

Evidence can also be obtained from tutors concerned with the delivery of programmes through reports, course logs and team meetings. While all staff should be involved with quality issues, it may be advisable to have a senior

staff member concerned specifically with overseeing quality across the college.

13.10 ANALYSING COSTS AND BENEFITS

The most effective evaluation of college services for adults would incorporate a cost-benefit analysis. For example, if demand, say for PICKUP provision, has been met successfully in terms of quantity and quality, managers will want to know whether this has been achieved in an efficient, cost- and price-effective way and what benefits have accrued to the college in terms of income generated, other contracts gained, etc. The advantage for future planning is that this would give insights into the potential benefits to a college if programmes and services for adult clienteles were improved or extended. The benefits would not be limited to financial gains: an HMI report on PICKUP provision in Wales indicates that college involvement in this work has led to increased levels of consultancy and access to a wider range of resources; staff updating and development of new skills; adoption of more flexible learning approaches; curricular developments and increased public awareness of college responsiveness (HMI, 1989).

This suggests that investment of time, effort and resources in the development of adult-specific services will eventually be amply repaid in terms of overall college development, and, moreover, that the resulting rise in a college's reputation can be an excellent selling point.

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ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

	YES/NO	ACTION
Are there arrangements for the collection, storage and analysis of data on all clients served by the college?		
Do your methods of collection and recording of information take full account of the non-conventional attendance and delivery modes favoured by adult students?		
Is the available computerised management information system appropriate for the recording of this data, and if not, how will required CMIS modification be resourced and undertaken?		
Are methods for the collecting of 'soft data' (such as client responses to the system) available?		
How is your college assessing the quality and outcomes of adult learning? Have any new measures for adult-specific activities in the college been defined?		
Evaluation of a college's provision for adults involves examination and monitoring not just of courses but of all aspects of a college's work. Are performance targets clearly articulated, and are they relevant to all aspects of college provision?		
Have indicators been developed which relate to the quality of teaching and learning methods and approaches employed with adult students?		
Are the purposes of monitoring and the use of performance indicators clearly understood by all involved?		
Are all college staff involved in monitoring, review and evaluation?		
On what basis do staff recognise and fulfil their role in the review process?		
Have staff been given time to familiarise themselves and adapt to existing evaluation measures and to establish quality control at course team level?		
Has a course review system been developed and implemented in provision for adults and are the measures and instruments used linked into the college strategic management process?		
Have staff involved in monitoring and evaluation received any training in collecting data?		
Are part-time staff working with adults expected to undertake data collection, analysing and reporting? Is this written into their contracts?		

	YES/NO	ACTION
How far are college industrial governors involved in monitoring and evaluating college performance?		
Has your college compared its performance indicators with those of other institutions with large numbers of adult learners?		

14 FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Each of the areas covered in previous chapters raises issues which touch on policy, finance and resource allocation. This chapter considers these matters in the following order:

14.1 Introducing the issues
14.2 Formula funding and LEA steering
14.3 College resourcing and adult students
14.4 Measures for resource allocation
14.5 Achievement-based resourcing
14.6 How can adult-centred work be supported?
14.7 Factors in resourcing work with adults
14.8 College strategies
14.9 The ownership of change
14.10 Concluding comments

14.1 INTRODUCING THE ISSUES

Effective provision for adult learners in further education colleges involves institutional flexibility and a student-centred approach. It involves curriculum design and delivery tailored to the needs of those individuals and groups provided for. It requires underpinning by appropriate staff development and information systems. And of course it costs money. On the one hand, there is a clear case for government to recognise that if further education is to reach more and more participants it will cost more money – a point reinforced by college managements and others during this project. On the other hand, it is also clear that much can be done through creative changes in policy priorities in LEAs, colleges and individual departments to shift the balance between class contact and effective student support, and to shift the present imbalance between services to full-time and part-time students. Much too can be done to maximise the sale of fully-costed provision to employers.

Shifting the balance of current expenditure does not necessarily mean robbing Peter to pay Paul. Given the demographic changes already observable in many colleges, and the changing patterns of participation, the processes discussed here are already in train in many colleges, though some will be building from a narrow base of experience. In considering a range of resourcing issues in this chapter, we are aware of the great diversity of further education institutions and their differing potential for change:

> *'What will work in one college will fail in another. What is acceptable in one LEA is anathema in another. Parameters of possibility shift with changes in local and national policies, with alterations in funding regulations or with the appointment of new principals or education officers' (EOC/FEU 1990).*

14.2 FORMULA FUNDING AND LEA STEERING

About 85 per cent of the general college budget is determined by a formula funding mechanism set by the LEA. The formula is calculated in different ways but essentially it is simply a mechanism for dividing available funding for FE between an authority's institutions (i.e. it determines how the cake is sliced but not the size of the cake). The particular formula used can, however, act as an incentive or a disincentive to colleges wishing to give a higher priority to provision for adult students.

The formula uses two types of weighting to convert the number of students attending courses by different study modes into an aggregated total to apply to the available resources. The weightings are generally fixed by mode of attendance and programme area.

Mode of attendance

Two different methods are in use for calculating student numbers. Both express the total in terms of FTEs (full-time equivalents). This is significant because most adults are part-time students and the perceived value of each student enrolment to the college may affect the institution's commitment to offer more flexible curricula and to attract non-traditional adult learners. The first method involves the use of a standard divisor to convert hours of attendance into FTEs (and the range varies from 720 to 900). The second method lists categories of attendance (such as full-time, block release, part-time, open learning) followed by corresponding multipliers. Some even distinguish between daytime and evening attendance. The values assigned to the multipliers vary widely: for example, open learning weightings vary from 0.07 to 0.2.

The issue of full-time equivalents (FTEs) is a complex one which is dealt with in many different ways. There needs to be more discussion about the most effective method of estimating FTEs, although NIACE REPLAN has investigated its application with regard to unwaged adults (see *Fixing the Formula*, NIACE REPLAN, forthcoming).

Programme area

Generally, programme areas are based on TOC classifications in development plans but a number of LEAs assign different weightings to programme areas such as basic education/ESOL, provision for access, and courses for unemployed people (weighted 1.5 in one shire county), community education and 'non-vocational education' (the weightings for which range from 0.3 to 1).

Although the formula allows for the calculation of a college budget on the basis of target intakes for particular course programmes, the college, operating net budgeting, can vire freely. In short, the college's spending pattern is not obliged to match the allocation formula. Nevertheless, where a college chooses to allocate resources internally in line with its notional formula totals, the weightings assigned can assume a greater significance

even though they fail to take into account such factors as the costs of outreach work, guidance and other support.

The inadequacy of relying on the LEA formula to guide in-college resourcing decisions is highlighted by the obvious point that, regardless of attendance pattern, every student makes similar demands on registry and administration and that library, assessment and examination costs depend more on programme area than on mode of attendance.

Colleges will recognise that attracting adult learners can be more expensive than providing initial vocational education for young people: resource-based learning and customised short courses cannot be done on the cheap.

Flexible delivery and attendance modes, outreach activities and new assessment systems such as those required to meet NCVQ criteria are likely to be expensive in terms of staff time and in terms of the range of support services needed to underpin them. In addition, unit-based and modular courses require the development of self-standing materials and quality learning packages which exploit the potential of a range of media. In-house development or adaptation of materials can be costly in terms of staff time and expertise.

In short, while there is an argument that tailoring the system to the requirements of adults can save money in the long term by increasing retention and completion rates, the initial costs of 'tooling up' the system may be high.

14.3 COLLEGE RESOURCING AND ADULT STUDENTS

The Education Reform Act has given colleges greater flexibility in managing their revenue budgets, which allows them the freedom to direct funds to services and course developments that will attract a new clientele, provided such a policy is approved by college governors and built into the LEA and college strategic plan. The Act aims to ensure that resources are related to levels of activity in a college. However, some of the formulae used for allocating resources are based on outdated assumptions about student characteristics, patterns of attendance and structure of programmes.

While the weighting for different programme areas may benefit adults in LEAs where there is with a strong access and equal opportunities orientation (e.g. Newham, where weightings support community education), a number of LEAs have chosen to dispense with weightings, relying on college virement to apportion resources equitably. Under the terms of the 1988 Act, colleges can ignore allocations of student numbers in any given year and vire or transfer student allocations from one subject to another in order to respond to client demand or market forces. Although Local Management of Colleges should, through the system of FTEs, allow colleges to safeguard adult participation, in most areas, weightings for part-time, open and distance learning students – the majority of whom will be adults – are not

generous, and full-time students are still generally worth more to a college than part-timers. Whilst this is primarily an issue for government, LEAs can influence college policy through development funding and weightings that reward the recruitment of part-time students.

Clearly, the case for adequate resourcing of adult learners must be made against a number of competing resource claims, and cost-intensive work with specific groups weighted alongside income-generating provision sold at full cost to employers. For, while there is an argument that if people value the educational process they should pay for it, income differentials mean that all cannot benefit equally. In a market-oriented system, the interests of some groups of adult learners will need to be safeguarded by active policy making. In those colleges where staff involved in adult and continuing education are not represented on senior management teams, conscious efforts will need to be made to secure the interests of adult learners.

14.3 MEASURES FOR RESOURCE ALLOCATION

The basis on which resources are allocated to colleges tends to disadvantage, albeit unintentionally, adult learners. The current system is still enrolment-led, although there is increased emphasis on successful completion and agreed progression. Staff – student ratios (SSRs), averaged timetables and high rates of class contact are used as the criteria for resource allocation. However, these measures are not sensitive to the system evolving in colleges, which is based, increasingly, on flexible delivery and outcomes. As it becomes less course-led, FE is becoming more student-centred and offering a diversity of services to meet individual student needs – APL, assessment on demand, credit accumulation and transfer, guidance provision, and other support facilities and services. These do not readily translate into formulae for areas of work and therefore do not get translated adequately into SSRs. Moreover, parameters such as SSR, enrolments and retention, applied via national averages, are difficult to apply to activities such as outreach development work and open learning in which attendance at an institution may be a minimal part of overall study time. They take no account of the varied learning and delivery modes required with adult students, and pressure to conform with these measures can inhibit flexibility and innovation in institutions.

In other words, SSRs do not reflect adequately the complexity of provision for adult learners and existing financial arrangements are more relevant to the old system than to the one which is currently evolving. A resourcing approach is needed which reflects new developments and emerging needs in further education. According to one college principal:

> *'When SSRs or unit costs cease to be used as the single most important parameter for funding purposes, colleges might be able to plan on the basis of need.'*

14.5 ACHIEVEMENT-BASED RESOURCING

One alternative approach to the resourcing of further education is being developed at Wirral Metropolitan College as part of a Training Agency (now TEED)-funded project, in conjunction with Wirral and Buckingham Education Authorities and Milton Keynes College. Entitled 'Learning Gain in Further Education and Achievement-based Resourcing', the project has, as one of its central aims, the development of a system that will relate resources directly to achievement. To do this an audit is being compiled – using a grid format – to work out the resources required for modes of delivery catering for students' individual needs. Four delivery modes – distance-learning, open/flexible learning, group learning and resource-based learning – appear on the grid's horizontal axis, and institutional structures and support services on the vertical axis. Some of these (teaching staff, materials, premises) are common to all institutions; others are specific to an 'achievement-led' institution: initial diagnostic assessment, APL, etc.

One concern with this strategy is illustrated in the impact outcome-related funding has had on Employment Training programmes. It can be argued to have created a tendency to cream off those students who are easiest to work with, and to abandon those it is hardest to help. There is also another problem with this approach. By their nature, performance targets have only a historical value. Where the future resources available to the LEA do not allow past achievement to be recognised at full value, they could lose credibility if their worth is diminished, and impossible to 'cash in'. However, the results of the Wirral project are not yet available, and they should contribute to the debate about alternative approaches to college resourcing.

14.6 HOW CAN ADULT-CENTRED WORK BE SUPPORTED?

National initiatives

There is an obvious need for a national initiative to devise funding mechanisms which recognise different patterns of participation and value part-time as much as full-time students. This means that the levels of resources made available to institutions and to learners should not discriminate against part-time students. If this were done, colleges would have greater incentives to encourage under-represented groups. In higher education, for example, the Inner London Education Authority used institutions' success in recruiting non-standard students as a measure for allocation of resources, and the Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council are considering similar measures.

In the absence of a national steer, initiatives to improve and support adult participation in further education can be stimulated by external factors such as available funding, by Local Education Authority policies and strategic plans, and, within a college, by management policies or staff-generated initiatives in specific areas.

Adaptation to external factors

Many colleges have improved their services for adults in response to economic imperatives such as the decline in the numbers of 16–19-year-old students. For particular areas of work such as information technology, educational guidance and provision for the adult unemployed, external grants have provided the stimulus, and in many colleges, pump-priming funding from sources such as WRAFE, ESG, ESF and REPLAN has acted as a potent catalyst for change. A REPLAN-funded initiative for unemployed adults in Weston Super Mare College, for example, has had a wide-ranging and lasting impact on the whole institution.

LEA-led change

Local Education Authorities with a commitment to adult access can have an impact on college practice through strategic plans and formula funding. Gloucestershire, for example, reserves development funds to encourage adult access to colleges.

Some flexible learning units or centres and activities connected with the Open College have been set up in colleges by LEAs through Education Support Grants. Others have been financed with funds from the Training Agency (now TEED).

LEA funding for specific initiatives such as open learning often depends on the extent to which an individual authority's policies and financial procedures allow it to incur high initial costs, although there is usually an expectation that a substantial proportion of the costs will eventually be recovered through colleges engaging in entrepreneurial activities.

College-generated change

Changes benefiting adult learners in individual colleges have been brought about as a result of:

- **specific departmental initiatives**: involving some programmes and student groups (e.g. Women into Engineering)
- **people-directed initiatives**: changes generated by enthusiastic members of staff committed to introducing measures to improve the experience of adult students, and carrying other colleagues along with them
- **whole college initiatives**: resulting from explicit and wide-ranging managerial policy (e.g. Wirral Metropolitan College). Mission statements help all staff to understand and recognise what the institution is for. They represent an effective tool with which managers can encourage field-led initiatives for adult learners which will complement institution-led changes.

14.7 FACTORS IN RESOURCING WORK WITH ADULTS

If colleges are to give greater importance to recruiting and retaining adult learners in order to respond to change in local and regional economies and to meet expressed demand, important first steps are to secure the commitment of people in different areas of seniority and to undertake an audit of current adult participation. The main resources required are staff time,

administrative support and suitable accommodation. Issues for managers to consider are:

- the rate of development the college can sustain
- how development costs are to be met
- what funding from base budget can be diverted to new initiatives
- ways of marketing courses effectively
- techniques for weighing up costs and benefits.

Budget cuts may present an opportunity for review of college services and the student body. According to one principal:

> *'We shouldn't just be thinking in terms of grants from government. It's not what resources we have, it's a matter of priorities and how resources are used.'*

Opinions differ on resource allocation. One FE staff member argues that changing the pattern of resource allocation will not significantly improve facilities for part-time students, and that more resources are needed; others maintain that more resources alone will not solve problems and colleges need to be more imaginative in their structures and procedures. In some institutions, for example, part-time students have a poor deal. They have no study space and facilities such as libraries may be closed at night. Colleges might consider whether underused space could be allocated as a base for part-timers and whether there could be some rotation of library times. This kind of flexibility is within a college's control.

Any shift in direction requires long- rather than short-term thinking. For example, the upgrading of facilities and provision of support services, though initially expensive, may have long-term benefits in terms of enrolment, student retention and attracting new business to the college. The provision of open access or drop-in workshops can overcome the problem of non-viability of small groups and ensure that effective and efficient use is made of expensive resources.

14.8 COLLEGE STRATEGIES

Self-financing courses

Colleges are funded from a multitude of sources including commercial and income-generating activities. These cover a wide range: short retraining courses, consultancy services, training needs analysis, provision for overseas students, provision for higher education students through franchising arrangements or via PCFC; on-site facilities such as restaurants, hairdressing salons, sports facilities, assessment and skills-testing; marketing of materials that have been developed in-house to other centres and institutions; marketing of staff skills through staff development for other institutions.

Many of these activities require substantial initial expenditure before they can become self-supporting. A college developing a product – for example, programmes for industry – needs to invest in accommodation, staff and

equipment, and spend on development of materials and essential overheads such as heating, lighting, telephones, travel and subsistence. The price charged to clients needs to reflect the full cost of provision and the price clients are prepared to pay. Once programmes are fully developed, they should become self-supporting.

Colleges can now keep the revenue and some have set targets that at least 10 per cent of their courses should be self-financing by 1992. This is achievable with some vocational courses. For example, City and Guilds unit-based courses in gardening in Mid-Glamorgan College of Agriculture and Horticulture are organised on a self-financed basis and since their introduction in 1988 attendance has averaged over 40. Self-financing of vocational programmes is not always possible, however, because of the erosion of some manufacturing industries and lack of apprentices. For colleges with expertise in areas such as engineering, self-financing may mean putting up fees to a level employers and individuals are not prepared to pay. Yet if such courses were cut, the country might lose precious skills.

This raises the question: is further education a service or a commercial operation? There may be a danger of leaning too much towards the latter. According to the Director of Marketing at a London college:

> *'Self-financing courses are only a partial solution. They shouldn't be run just for the sake of it. The benefits have to feed into the rest of the college. After all, we're not just a commercial organisation, we're in the business of education' (Cornish, 1991).*

Nevertheless, FE colleges can learn from the experience of adult education services in developing balanced, self-financing and net-budgeted programmes to maximise the range of student needs met within fixed budgets.

Redirecting profits

There is no doubt that entrepreneurial activity and allowing courses, groups or departments to build up surpluses can have positive spin-offs for other areas of work in a college. PICKUP courses, for example, which are offered on a full-cost basis can create surpluses which can be reinvested to promote further development. According to the head of adult services in one college:

> *'The college makes a good living selling short courses to industry and redirects money my way.'*

There are three caveats to this, however. Firstly not all colleges are able to make major profits from commercial activities which they can then use to subsidise other areas of work. Secondly, PICKUP has pointed to the danger that colleges may not include the full range of costs in pricing full-cost provision and as a result may underestimate the real cost of such services. Finally, there are of course opportunity costs in any form of provision which need to be calculated in considering the amount of full-cost provision a college can afford.

Combining groups

Work with adults sometimes requires small groups or one-to-one work. The costs can be offset by increased independent learning and having groups and independent learners working in the same room with the tutor acting as a resource.

Colleges might also explore whether economies can be made by putting work together. For example, small groups of A-Level students are expensive and many colleges put groups of 16–19-year-olds doing resits and adult students together.

Buying in learning resources and materials

Before investing in expensive in-house development of learning materials, colleges might examine the possibility of buying in learning materials, for example by using the Open Tech or the Materials and Resources Information Service Network (Maris-Net).

Remitting staff time

Colleges do this in different ways. Some run cross college staff development for all staff, others concentrate resources on small specialist teams. Both routes have implications for class size and other costings throughout the college.

14.9 THE OWNERSHIP OF CHANGE

There can be a tension in institutions between changes that are generated as a result of whole-institution policy and those which evolve from innovations introduced to meet specific needs within the institution, or in response to particular external changes. This tension is often expressed in terms of 'ownership' of initiatives: how far fieldworkers identify with management-led changes and how sympathetic strategic planners are when confronted with innovations that 'don't fit'. The quality of consultation and negotiation within the college and the lines of communication between internal discussion and external accountability – through governors, customers, students and potential students – are vital to creating a culture of common ownership of change. These issues are of particular importance where adults are concerned.

14.10 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

It is too soon to evaluate how far achievement-led resourcing mechanisms can replace the input measures used in most colleges, but it is clear that the move to identify outcomes has implications for management and resourcing as well as for assessment and accreditation. It may also be too soon to resolve the problem of how to change the pattern of resource allocation to improve facilities for part-time students and for adults needing significant 'other resource' support. However, adult learners should benefit in the long-term from the changes in colleges brought about by the adoption of mission

statements, institutional, departmental or sectoral policy statements, action plans for implementation, and regular monitoring and review. Most colleges will use these mechanisms to manage change in the 1990s. It will be vital to clarify the effects of initiatives in policy, finance and resource allocation on adult learners, but in this report we are conscious that there are more questions than answers. Colleges seeking to adjust practice need to consider how far the existing legislative and administrative framework and the mechanisms for resource allocation and for measuring performance are in themselves inhibitors of change, and how much can be achieved incrementally, by using a structured, carefully phased development plan.

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ISSUES FOR MANAGERS

	YES/NO	ACTION
Has your college fully negotiated with the LEA the formula used for converting part-time students to FTEs? Has there been discussion of the impact on certain groups of formula funding? Does the formula take adequate account of independent, open or flexible learning?		
Has there been any attempt to persuade the LEA to change financial arrangements to make them more supportive of adult participation?		
Has your college made representations to the DES on the need to review its arrangements for funding further education in a way that takes account of the extent and variety of adult participation and the increase in college services and activities which do not involve class attendance and staff contact time?		
Does your college have a computerised management information system capable of disaggregating enrolment figures to ensure that all provision for adults which is accountable for LEA Standard Spending is recorded and accounted for?		
In order to plan change, has your college undertaken an audit of adult participation to identify barriers and possibilities?		
How does your college prioritise its resources: proactively or reactively?		
Have managers calculated what budgetary and structural changes will be needed to provide new learning, assessment and support services for adult groups?		
Is it fully recognised that effective access to provision for many adults is strongly dependent on funding for person-centred services (e.g. guidance, childcare)?		
In weighing up the costs and benefits of developing new provision and introducing new services for adult learners, do managers take a five-year or ten-year perspective?		
In allocating the budget to sections of work within the college, have managers been concerned with equal opportunities including adult access?		
Is there a mechanism for viring to encourage greater participation by adult learners within your college?		
What mechanism exists to identify and monitor the remission of teaching time necessary to undertake the activities and duties identified as essential in offering an effective service to adult learners?		
Have other sources of start-up finance for new initiatives been explored (e.g. from European Social Fund, the DES, TEED, DTI).		

	YES/NO	ACTION
Have departments or course teams been encouraged to build up surpluses? How are they then held accountable for accumulation and dispersal of funds?		
To what extent have surpluses from entrepreneurial activities been invested in under-resourced developments elsewhere in your college?		
Has your college exploited the potential for marketing to industry and commerce and other education and training providers, newly developed programmes, teaching/learning resources and staff skills in areas such as assessment, APL?		
Has the college accurately costed staff release time for employer liaison and has the right price been charged?		
In calculating space utilisation costs, are managers aware that making available particular kinds of accommodation with a variable load factor which is specific to adult education use could, by affecting the unit cost, affect the unit of resource allocated to them in the delegated budget?		

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APPENDIX

In 1989 the then Training Agency commissioned the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) to undertake a one-year project 'to advise and encourage further education colleges on strategies to improve their effectiveness in meeting the needs of adult learners'. The Training Agency also asked for recommendations on priorities for future allocation of Mutual Development Fund monies. The project was undertaken by NIACE with the participation of its sister units UDACE (the Unit of the Development of Adult Continuing Education) and REPLAN (the DES programme for the education of unemployed adults).

The project was conducted in three stages:

- production of an interim report for the Training Agency (now TEED) by 30 September 1990
- consultation with further education colleges on the draft report by 28 February 1991
- preparation of a final report for the Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate by 31 March 1991.

The report analyses issues affecting adult learners, highlights good practice with adults in further education colleges, and makes recommendations to colleges on instruments for change to improve opportunities for adult learners. Each chapter summarises issues for senior managers and for teaching and organising staff.

In seeking responses to the interim report, NIACE asked colleges to comment on whether there were any significant omissions or errors in the text or major imbalances in its focus, and to identify:

- illustrations of good practice that confirm or qualify arguments in the text
- further evidence to develop the arguments begun in the final section of the interim report
- priorities for MDF funding to improve adult participation in colleges.

At the interim report stage NIACE, REPLAN and UDACE identified the following priorities for future MDF research/embedding work in England and Wales:

- An examination of the extent to which government, local education authority and institutional policy and resourcing mechanisms inhibit improving opportunities for adult participation.
- Identification of alternative forms of resource allocation, and the development of whole-college policy and action plans to improve adult participation.

- How mechanisms can be developed between LEAs and their institutions and TECs for improving further education opportunities for adult learners.
- Identification of successful strategies which improve the recruitment and retention of adults from groups under-represented in colleges (working-class men over 25, women, black people, linguistic minorities, people with special needs), as who participates is a key question in improving access.
- Demonstration of the ways in which specific departmental or sectoral initiatives with adult learners can be used to influence change across a broad range of college activities, highlighting methods of developing an adult-sensitive culture of learning.

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Stephen McNair, *Head of Unit, UDACE*
Alastair Thomson, *NIACE REPLAN central unit*
Alan Tuckett, *Director, NIACE*
Tony Uden, *Head of Unit, NIACE REPLAN*

The report was co-ordinated and redrafted by Veronica McGivney (NIACE Research and Development Officer), from material commissioned from:
Carole Barnes, *UDACE*
Jacqui Buffton, *Gloucestershire LEA*
Michael Chewter, *REPLAN*
Peter Davies, *Further Education Staff College*
Rhiannon Evans, *Wirral Metropolitan College*
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The report analyses issues affecting adult learners, highlights good practice with adults in colleges of further education, and makes recommendations on instruments for change to improve opportunities for adult learners.

It is divided into three main sections, each of which reviews a number of areas of policy and practice in relation to adult learners. The chapters identify issues confronting colleges at different stages of their contact with adult learners, and offer practical guidance based on existing college experience. For quick reference, the implications for college managers and staff are separated out at the end of each chapter.

Veronica McGivney is Research and Development Officer, NIACE. Her numerous publications in the field of adult education include **Education's For Other People: Access to education for non-participant adults**, *the report of an ESRC-funded project, which was published by NIACE in 1990.*

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